Lifestyle

Filipino designer Monique Lhuillier wows Big Apple

Entertainment

Upbeat Annette Gozon-Abrogar takes over as GMA Films president

World / A13

Prince Charles, Camilla Parker Bowles to wed

World / A10

North Korea admits for first time it has nuclear weapons

Business Friday

Emily Abrera goes to bed advertising fest as RP's 1st jury rep

GMA declares Feb. 25 special nonworking holiday

FEB. 25, 1986 MS will be a special nonworking holiday for the country.

President Macapagal-Arroyo declared the day a special national holiday to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the 1986 Edsa People Power Revolution that toppled the Marcos dictatorship.

In Proclamation No. 785, the President

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

GMA goes a-courting, ups Valentine's gift to P3,000

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

LIKE a smitten lover, President Macapagal-Arroyo is upping the ante by giving government employees a "Valentine bonus" of P3,000, or

mail feedback@inquirer.com.ph | Friday, February 11, 2005 | 34 pages | vol. 30 | no. 45 | website: www.inq7.net

Battalion commander killed in Sulu

A MORTAR attack fatally wounded Lt. Col Bonnie Villanueva. He was rushed to the provincial hospital in Jolo where medical personnel, including this Muslim nurse, tried to save his life.

General also owns unit in luxury Makati condo

By Fe Zamora

AMID news a condo at Sinatras at the Sky, named for Gen. Jacinto Ligot, owns a unit at Paseo Parkview, one of the country's luxury residential highrises just a stone's throw away from Ayala Avenue, according to a House defense committee fact sheet on Ligot's alleged P60-million in unexplained wealth.

In fact, Ligot was reportedly at his Paseo condo unit when a female member of the committee staff tried to deliver an invitation for him to appear before a hearing on corruption in the military last Oct. 13, according to the committee report.

The report said a contact in the house, a security officer of the building, and others guards at the door "readily recognized the general's name and received the invitation."

"They even allowed the committee staffer to proceed to Ligot's unit thinking that she was a personal friend. (But) the staffer declined due to the late hour," the report said.

The invitation was then placed in Ligot's paposhblat, but Ligot appeared at the hearing only a month later, saying he had not been informed about it.

BANGKAL, A10

Nur's rebels reject calls for ceasefire

By PDI Mindanao Bureau

JOLO, Sulu—An Army battalion commander and one of his men were killed while six other soldiers were wounded in a gun battle following fresh attacks mounted by followers of jailed Moro leader Nur Misuari in Panamao town early yesterday.

The latest fatalities raised the military's toll to four days of fighting to at least 25 dead and more than 50 wounded. Most clashes were reported on the leader of the renegades, Jaber Shiek, rejected calls by provincial officials for a ceasefire.

According to military reports, the rebels had suffered 43 dead since Monday, in some of the most intense fighting in the region in years.

Thousands of villagers have been displaced in sporadic skirmishes in at least six towns.

Brig. Gen. Agustin Dotto-ala, chief of the Southern Command's Task Force Comet, said Shiek's group fired mortar shells on a contingent from the army's 32nd Infantry Battalion in Barangay Sik, Panamao.

Eight soldiers were wounded in the shelling, but two of them—Lt. Col. Dennis Vil-

BATTALION, A10

MARTYRED metropolis: Manila, historians agree, was second only to Warsaw, Poland, in terms of devastation. It was the only Allied capital in the Pacific that was destroyed.

HOLOCAUST IN MANILA

The most vicious crime in RP history

(Editor's Note: One hundred thousand civilians, mostly Filipinos, perished in the 28-day Battle for Manila in February 1945. The Memoirs Manila 1945 Foundation founded by the survivors and descendants of the victims aims to keep the flame of remembrance burning brightly for the mounting of their dying.

On Feb. 12, the Memoirs and the Friends of Intramuros will honor the martyrs with a Mass, wreath-laying and the endless retelling of their stories.)

By Benito J. Legarda Jr.

(For al carte)

FEBRUARY 2005 marks the 60th anniversary of the most vicious crime in Philippine history, the sacking of Manila in February 1945 by Japanese military forces. No other single event in our history even remotely approximates the extent of material destruction, the number of casualties, the manner of dealing death, and the loss of cultural heritage.

TURN TO PAGE A20

Militants assail 'secret' releases of Marcos loot

By Juliet Labog-Javellana, Cynthia D. Balana and Norman Bordadora

MILITANT groups assailed yesterday Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's sweeping surrender of the Marcos ill-gotten wealth, they said, closely linked Malacañang's claim that the money was still intact.

Anak-pawis party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano

MILITANTS, A10

2nd witness to murder fought back

IMADAM CITY—This one was able to fight back.

A vital witness to the 2003 murder of journalist Edgar Damalerio was able to foil an apparent attempt on his own life on Wednesday morning by shooting at a group of unidentified armed men lurking near his hideaway.

"They managed to escape," Edgar Ongue, 55, told the reporter from an undisclosed location. He said he fired a revolver at his attackers before they could enter the house he was staying in.

Only a week earlier, Edgar

Motorists grumble over 400% hike in NLEX toll fees

By Tyrone Ongjoc and Carmela Reyes
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—On the first day of operation of the 82-km North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) declared short toll holidays to give motorists enough breathing room from queues and motorists griping over higher fees.

MNTC began collecting the new fees representing an increase of some 400 percent at 1 a.m. yesterday, according to Marlene Ochoa, an NLEX president for public information.

For class "E" vehicles, the fee to Balintawak from Tabang is P55;

ROAD RAGE: Motorists traveling on the North Luzon Expressway are up in arms over the new toll fees about which they had not been informed.

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Senate OKs 'skin-and-bones' budget

PEACEMAKERS
Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo is shown at the Department of Foreign Affairs delegation of the member countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference who are here to monitor the peace process between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The mission is headed by Malaysian Ambassador Mustafa Tarmizhi (right). — RYAN

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Christine Avendaño

AFTER two weeks of intense floor debates, the Senate last night passed on second and third reading the P907.3-billion national budget.

With a vote of 14 to 0, the Senate sent the General Appropriations Act of 2005 on its way to the bicameral conference committee which will iron out differences.

Sen. Manuel Villar Jr., chair of the finance committee which shepherded the passage of the bill, described it as a "skin-and-bones" budget.

He said the budget had "little flexibility" because of the low allocations for capital expenditures and social services.

But increasing the budget was not an option because it would further worsen the deficit, which stands at P186 billion, said Villar.

The only solution would be for revenue officials to increase tax collections, he said.

Ombudsman solution

To plug the loopholes in revenue collection, the budget bill increased the appropriation for the Office of the Ombudsman from the proposed P1.49 million to P209 million.

Villar said the P60-billion additional funding for the Ombudsman's office would be used to hire graft investigators to monitor corruption in revenue-generating agencies like the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs.

The P907.3-billion budget was P2.6 billion short of the version passed by the House of Representatives last year.

As for the Countryside Development Fund, commonly known as the pork barrel, members were allotted P1.25 million each, amounting to P60 million, while each House member got P40 million, down from P75 million.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said Sen. Ruffy Lacson grew up with pork-barrel funds for his projects.

Lacson proposed to increase by P201 million the budget of the Bureau of Fire Protection to pay for the retroactive differential benefits of retirees there, which they have not been receiving since 1993, was approved.

Villar, who chairs the Senate finance committee, told reporters that cuts were made from the budgets of departments and agencies but most of these, totaling P900 million, were realigned to other departments.

A majority was the 20-percent across-the-board reduction in the funds for intelligence, travel, confidential and training expenses of government agencies and departments.

Exempted from the 20-percent cut in these categories were the congressional budget and included the Office of the President, the tourism department and state universities and colleges (SUCs).

"These constitutional bodies were not touched out of turf consideration," Villar said.

He explained that that the DOT was exempted from the 20-percent cut because it needed money to spend for promoting the country while senators saw no need to reduce the already meager budgets of the SUCs.

Villar said the senators had come up with provisions that would ensure that the expenditures of government agencies are watched.

For instance, he said that no additional budget would be released to the autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao if previous money releases had not been completely liquidated.

Opposition/anti-vote yes

"So our bottomline here is this budget is not only for the opposition to refute but to make sure," Villar said.

Three opposition senators—Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Alfredo Lim and Jinggoy Estrada—said they voted for the budget but raised reservations, particularly about the budget of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Pimentel said he objected to the DENR budget because the department had "underperformed" while Madrigal said the department's performance was "not up to par."

In mid-morning of interpellations, led by Madrigal before the DENR budget of P5.84 billion was finally approved.

Sen. Edgardo Angara, who did not take part in the plenary voting, criticized the approved budget as "reinforcing government's "expedient" to funding social services and fighting poverty.

In a speech assailing the measure this Wednesday, Angara said the budget had been programmed to pay debts and not much else, "and thus could not be expected to lift the economy from its sorry plight or, heaven forbid, rise."

More Pinoys deported from Malaysia

By Jerome Aning

SEQUEL the suspension of a nationwide crackdown on illegal aliens in Malaysia, a total of 288 Filipinos, mostly from Sabah, have been deported to the Zamboanga City Labor Secretariat Relations Office, Tesoro said yesterday.

Sec. Tesoro told reporters that even if the Philippines government had postponed the crackdown at the end of the three-month amnesty period on Feb. 1, state and local immigration laws would still be enforced.

"The drive against illegal aborted balut smuggled here by our Filipino workers was suspended. There is no preventing police and immigration officers in coordination from arresting illegal aliens in compliance with the current local laws," Sec. Tesoro explained.

Under Malaysia's federal setup, the states of Sabah and Sarawak retain certain rights to control immigration.

Giving a report from the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Bureau 9 office, Sec. Tesoro said the labor deportees, numbering about 270, arrived in the city the other day on board MV Mary Joy.

The rest of the deportees arrived on other ships as early as Feb. 5.

Among the latest deportees, according to Swiss Baguio Overseas Inward Mailed, were Cleto evaders who were victims of illegal recruitment.

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PIATCO FIASCO

Graft charges filed vs 3 ex-DOTC chiefs

By Armand N. Nocum

Graft charges were filed yesterday against three former secretaries of transportation and communications and two former managers and five corporation officials in connection with the controversial construction of Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport that has now spawned three penalties.

Charged with graft before the Sandiganbayan for entering into a "grossly disadvantageous" contract with private consortium Philippine International Air Terminals Co. Inc. (Piatco) were former Transportation Secretaries Vicente Rivera Jr. and Jesus Garcia, who were succeeded by current Pres. President Joseph Estrada and President Macapagal-Arroyo, respectively.

Earlier, the Ombudsman had recommended the filing of graft charges against former Transportation Secretary Arturo Enrile, as representative of ex-President Fidel V. Ramos, but Enrile died years ago.

Piatco built the new airport terminal together with Tomoen and Japanese partners.

Also charged were former Transportation and Communication Undersecretary Frisco "Jun" Gil and Wilfredo Trinidad, then chief counsel, respectively, of the public bids and awards committee (PBAC) of the Bids 3 project.

Trinidad had briefly served as acting transportation and communications secretary in 2001.

P50,000 bail

Other respondents were former Manila International Airport Authority general manager Francisco Ortañez, and Piatco chief lawyer T. Co. Piatco president Cheng Tong, Piatco directors Sara Arthur Vogel and Bert L. Straub, and Mitsui Leasing, Piatco consultant.

Bail for the accused was set at P50,000 each, but few would have to pay P50,000 for three graft counts, and Trinidad P60,000, for their respective freedom.

Alvarez, Gil, Ateyde And Trinidad, then key PBAC officials, were accused of "conspiring, confederating and mutually helping one another" in "unlawfully and criminally" giving favors to the InterCargo Consortium, which was later incorporated into Piatco.

In a complaint filed by Dennis B. Funtok, graft investigation and prosecution officer in the Office of the Ombudsman, the four were accused of awarding the project to Piatco in 1996 despite the "knowledge that there was "not a qualified bidder as it had no financial capability to undertake the project at the time of the pre-qualification under the BOT (Build, Operate and Transfer) Law."

Thus, Piatco is "not legally entitled to such privilege or benefit, to the damage and prejudice of the government," Funtok's complaint said.

Rivera and the rest were accused of entering the contract with Piatco in 1996 even "with the fact the government shall assume the liabilities of Piatco in the event of the latter's default," a condition "most beneficial to Piatco and in violation of the BOT Law."

'Substantial deviation'

He was also charged with conspiring with the late Enrile to make a "substantial deviation" from the contract, which "obliged the government to pay P180 million" to Piatco in the event the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Authority constructed a third runway modified the construction contract of Bids 3.

Trinidad, Tong, Vogel, Straub and Lo-renzo were faulted for negotiating in 2000 the construction of a "less expensive access road" (a connect Bids 3 with Bids 2) instead of the "technical" one originally planned, which Piatco was supposed to build, which resulted in increase cost to Piatco.

Arroyo and Abueva were also accused of granting a franchise to Piatco, even if they were not authorized to do so.

The Piatco controversy has dashed the opening of the $460-million Bids 3 terminal for two years now.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said the Ombudsman has made the case one of the "big cases" they will work to resolve before Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo reaches term in five years.

Villa-Ignacio said resolving the Piatco case—as well as those involving the Macoys, Getulios, tax credits, Jalosjos and Garcia cases—would send a clear graft and show that the Arroyo administration was serious about getting graft to jail.

SPORTS

THE HOMEBASE Jewels and their opponents pickaboo after clinching the PBL Open title.

Jewels bask in title glow

By Jasmine N. Paya

WITH 14 seconds remaining, Alex Compton looked at the scoreboard and pumped his fist in the air. The scoring totals are longer in doubt.

Pitching with patience and energy from start to finish, the Homebase Jewels bagged their first ever title in the Philippine Basketball League, edging the Open Championship by blasting the Pasig-out Pantaleones, 79-68, yesterday at the Makati Coliseum.

The Jewels found an another scorching shooting performance from Finale Most Valuable Player Alex Compton, who finished fourth against high 20 points.

But the Jewels also got gritty plays from veteran playmaker Ibrahim Kaguren, who shot 12 points and pulled off three steals.

"I'm so proud of my players," said coach Robert Sison, whose Jewels let the entire bulk-jumps. "But I'm really so proud to him also. I've always counted him as my player and it's really a dream come true."

Antonio Bengil, didn't come only for the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

DLSU nears plum

By Hyung B. Cardito

RAMOS, 16, Jones just added his players and is keep in straight sets.

Pilipi De jer was one only for five books.

Pitching with utmost tendency, La Salle came back from two sets down yesterday to post a 27-29, 17-25, 25-22, 25-23, 15-7 victory over Ateneo Tower and move within a win of redemption in the Shakey's V-League.

The Lady Archers refused to fold up and die after losing the first two sets, forcing an Rhapsody Rosario and Michelle Gervacio registered earthy scores (16 down) and 24 assists that set up a big celebration.

Not only did La Salle take a 1-0 lead, it moved the Lady Archers to within a win of returning a favor to the defending champion Tigresses, who swept them in the finals of the league's first conference last year.

"I simply told my players that we could not lose in three sets," Jo Jones said. "It motivated them and we were able to come back strong and win."

Ramona Pascual limped out of the floor after the first four points of the fifth set because of a slight right ankle sprain, and Jia Jia the DLT offense in disarray.

Ateneo Tower coach Jaypee Mendoza, obviously disappointed at the way he lost, said that Pascual will definitely suit up for Game 2 Sunday at 3:30 p.m. the of the Philippines and Ateneo.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
FRIDAY
FEBRUARY 11, 2005

DEFECTIVE CHARGE SHEETS

300 Oakwood mutineers delay arraignment anew

By Alexis Pope

THE ARRAIGNMENT of some or 300 soldiers who took part in the failed Oakwood mutiny in July 2003 was deferred again yesterday after a military court hearing there case said the charge sheets submitted by the prosecution for three violations of the Articles of War were defective on its face.

In yesterday's general court-martial proceedings held in Camp Aguinaldo, the military court headed by Brig. Gen. Ferdinand Navales directed military prosecutors to "correct" errors and omissions in the charge sheet, which outlined the charges brought against the soldiers.

Defense lawyers led by Harel Pulido and Theodore Te presented motions to the charge sheet, particularly the crossing out of Maj. Antonio Villamor's name in the charge sheet for violation of Article of War 96 or conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.

Reinvestigation

They said Villamor's exclusion from the charges should result in either a reinvestigation of the case or considered as Cyber charges.

"The court has directed to defer the arraignment in charge three (Article of War 96) and directed the Trial Judge Advocate to take appropriate action on the questioned charges, particularly on the manners and topographical errors," ordered Navy Capt. Reinerio Zabal, law member of the court-martial, after an executive session.

The court also set the next hearing on Feb. 17.

Navales later told reporters that the directive also covered all charge sheets for Article of War 96, Article of War 63 (disrespect toward the President) and Article of War 64 (disrespect toward superior officer).

"We ruled to postpone the reading of charges and the arraignment because there have been questions from the defense panel over the manner of the names of Maj. Villamor," Navales said in Filipino.

Col. Julius Magno of the prosecution said its representative the manner was "not substantial enough to affect the document."

Navales agreed, later explaining in response after the hearing that these were only "formal corrections" to the charge sheet.

But "It, however, pointed out that if Villamor's name was taken out of the charge sheet, there should have been an explanation and a withdrawal of that charge."

The same boat

"Villamor et al are charged together apparently as part of a conspiracy. Why will you exonerate one person if they are all in the same boat? What we are asking is that particular charge be actually withdrawn because it is defective," he told reporters.

Pulido added there might be a need for a new pre-trial investigation because of the defective charge sheet. "It needs another pre-trial. They are saying that it is not a formal defect. To begin with, it should not have been there. Because we are living with a defective document, You cannot proceed with a defective charge sheet."

Prosecutors also brought before the court Maj. Orlando Landrigan Jr., who submitted an affidavit explaining the omission.

Landrigan told the court that he crossed out Villamor's name with spectacular marks since the pre-trial investigation revealed that the officer was not present at the Oakwood luxury apartments when the Magdalo soldiers seized it on July 27, 2003.

According to Landrigan, he informed verbally Trial Judge Advocate General Brig. Gen. Manuel Santeiro about the dropping of the charges against Villamor. He said Santeiro gave a verbal approval.

Landrigan admitted, though, that military court rules do not allow the crossing out of an accused soldier's name with a pen.

San Beda HS '62 reunion party set

MEMBERS of San Beda College High School '62 will hold a welcome party on Feb. 14 at 7 p.m. on 19 Scout Rasal, South Triangle, Quezon City.

The effort is part of the activities highlighting the reunion of San Beda HS '62 this year.

The week-long celebration, which will include various out-of-town activities for batch members and their families, will be capped by a farewell dinner at the penthouse of Sotto Plaza to be hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Ernie Sotto.

San Beda College HS '62 members may contact Manny Gonzales at 0917-7151000 or Mel Soriano at 0918-9131022 or 0917-8128276.

Kings eye clincher in Game 6 tonight

MARK Telan of Talk 'N Text slams over Sta Rosa's Andy Seigle and Eric Menk during Game 5.

Collegiate Champion's League begins

Lady Archers capture NCRAA diadem

Jewels bask in title . . .

Villarosa dies, 48

SPORTSWATCH

Lakers vs Pistons on STAR Sports

Taguig fun run gets Patafa support

Ramirez, Keen, De Vega scoop guests

Neg. Occ, Cebu take Visayas openers

Kintanar's Cup slated tomorrow

Impeach move doomed, say GMA allies

By Cecilio Pulido and Christine O. Avendaño

AN IMPEACHMENT complaint has yet to be filed against President Macapagal-Arroyo but the only lawmakers who would make the preliminary evaluation are saying it is "doomed from the start."

Three members of the House committee on justice, including its vice chair, issued a joint statement yesterday saying they would vote for the "immediate dismissal" of any impeachment complaint that may be filed before the panel.

They were Lakas Reps. Marcelino Libanan (Eastern Samar), panel vice chair, and members Antonio Pamplona (Bacolod City) and Isidro Rodriguez (Cambanga del Sur).

"The opposition is desperately trying to revive dead issues in the absence of new charges against the President," Libanan said.

'Extraordinary' session

But an "extraordinary" session will be called next week by a group of Constitution experts to determine if they would support former Whiz Leader Angelino Gordon's planned July call for the impeachment of the President.

Pimentel told reporters yesterday the Philippine Constitution Association (Philconsa) board would meet on Feb. 14.

"[They] will determine whether or not they would take action on my challenge in there," he said.

Pimentel earlier this week had urged Philconsa to initiate the impeachment of Arroyo against the President for alleged violation of the Constitution and betrayal of the public trust on three counts.

Pimentel cited as one basis Mr. Arroyo's alleged use of public funds, reportedly drawn from the "road users' tax and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, in her campaign for the May 10 elections.

But some opposition congressmen said they first wanted to see Pimentel's evidence against the President.

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero, for one, said the opposition wanted to see a "real, clear and concise basis for impeachment" before the bloc filed a complaint.

Escudero said the opposition did not want to rush the filing of an impeachment complaint because should it be dismissed, then it could have to wait a full year before they could file another one.

"I don't care what other opposition people want to do or not want to do," Pimentel said.

Opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who mulled an impeachment complaint against the President several months ago because, "she controls the House," he said.

Rehashed charges

Libanan dismissed the allegations against President Arroyo as "rehashed charges."

"We will not allow the justice committee to be a venue for politicking," he said.

Pantaleon Alvarez, for his part, scoffed at Pimentel's claim that the President could be impeached for making too many appointments to government.

"The Administrative Code allows her to create and dissolve offices to serve public service," Pantaleon said.

Under the Constitution, the House committee on justice first determines if an impeachment complaint is sufficient in both form and substance.

If the committee says yes, probably will be voted down by the justice committee for lack of substance," Pantaleon said.

An impeachment complaint would not prosper in the administration-dominated House, according to Abad, "because the President committed no culpable violation of the Constitution."

Strongman's daughter bites militarization of bureaucracy

By Carlito Pablo, Cynthia Balana and Christian V. Esguerra

If Well, her father, the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, who all but institutionalized the practice of packing the civilian bureaucracy with retired and active generals to keep the men under the arms happy.

But the irony was lost on Bodoy Scott Step. Imee Marcos who yesterday trashed President Macapagal-Arroyo's appointment as public works secretary of Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., the national security adviser who is a former chief of the Philippine National Police.

She said Ebdane's appointment to the Cabinet proved that Mr. Arroyo was "not serious about paying her dues to the military and its pseudo-civilian persona, the Philippine National Police."

Marcos said the President may have learned her lesson all too well against antagonizing the "men with the guns."

Mr. Arroyo rose to power on the back of a military-backed popular uprising that ousted her predecessor, Joseph Estrada.

Marcos, a member of the congressional Commission on Appointments, said the Presidential objective was to "satiate" the military establishment with appointments to powerful positions to discourage military adventurism.

Engineering background

She cited other former military men in supposedly sensitive positions like Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, Intelligence Fund Commissioner Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Transportation Secretary Leonardo Abrahamz, Subic undersecretary Felix Pinol, Jose Calimlim, and Narciso Abaya, the president and chief operating officer of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority.

Two House members, however, welcomed the appointment of Ebdane.

Rep. Eric Singson, chair of the House committee on public works and highways, said that aside from his engineering background, Ebdane had the capability to untie the fractious DPWH whose rank-and-file employees had agitated against former DPWH head Florante Soriquez, who was unlikely his bosses for other day.

Rep. Faysah Dimaporo (Lakas, Lanao del Sur), chair of the House committee on social welfare, said that Ebdane's knowledge of how to handle peace and order problems would help in the delivery of infrastructure to the impoverished autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

"The DPWH has been lagging behind in development largely because of the peace and order problem there. Ebdane... knows about the dynamics of bringing in infrastructure, ensuring it gets done despite threats and its beneficial effect in bringing about peace," Dimaporo said.

But Sen. Drilon, opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara said he was puzzled at the Ebdane appointment and asked why the President seemed to have "a narrow pool of talent" from which to pick Cabinet appointments.

Shallow pool

"There are many top-rate engineers in our country with tremendous experiences in public works. Why is her pool very narrow, practically limited to ex-police, ex-military?" the senator said.

He urged Mr. Arroyo to widen her pool and tap into "tremendous intellectual talents instead of relying on one "talisman of society."

Sen. Blenvar Defensor-Santiago said Ebdane would have a "tough time" getting confirmed by the Commission on Appointments. She doubted the CA would continue to encourage the practice of appointing generals to the Cabinet, which she said should have been stopped years ago.

Santiago said she was against the practice as "the number of a military [man] is commensurate with the rank of a military," meaning that military people have a culture of obedience and not of critical analysis.

"If you put them in civilian positions, they expect to be obeyed. They cannot take criticisms, especially constructive criticism in the manner of how civilian bureaucracy structures its authoritarian," she said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said Ebdane could prove he is worthy of the job by curbing the rampant corruption in the DPWH bureaucracy.

Camp Crame officials meanwhile are confident that their boss, PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay, would succeed Ebdane as undersecretary.

One officer said Aglipay "just a matter of time" before Aglipay, who only has 16 days left as PNP chief, is appointed to the Cabinet.

Aglipay yesterday at first denied that he would get the post vacated by Ebdane, saying: "I don't think so. I should." But he also conceded that he is supposed to fill his old post.

Up to God

But when told that the Ebdane appointment would be temporary, Aglipay said, "It's up to God Almighty whom He'll put me."

"I think the already gave me the case. Ang [I] always pursued his. In whatever position he'll grant me, I'll do my best once again," he said.

Speculation is also rife at Camp Crame that Aglipay is being considered to head the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, replacing Director Dionisio Santiago, the alleged Drugs Special Operations Task Force.

Amid the passing game, what's certain is that Aglipay will go on a 10-day leave, starting the remainder of his term in only 20 days.

He will be attending an antinarcotics conference in Laos, France, from Feb. 23 to March 7. With reports from Akiko Inoue and Delfin Asendido

Sacked DPWH chief says he'll be cleared

OUTGOING Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane, who was sacked from his post the other day, yesterday said he was confident that the investigation of the corruption allegations against him would end "without a scratch on my integrity."

Soriquez, who was returned to his old post of undersecretary continued to blame DPWH officials affected by his reforms for the massive double-taxation conspiracy and black propaganda that led to his ouster.

"[They] are motivated by fear of losing their grip on opportunities for graft," he said in a press statement.

In a briefing, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Soriquez, who is accused of stifling kickbacks in government infrastructure projects, was given a choice between retiring or sliding back to undersecretary.

Ermita said Soriquez opted to stay on, saying he had nothing to fear and wanted to face the charges like a man.

Soriquez said the last few weeks at the DPWH were the most trying of his 42-year career in government service.

"I am confident that the truth once will find its rightful end and I am hopeful that in the end, it is the interest of the people that shall win," he said.

Assistant Sec. Jose Rey Faustino Ofiaza calmly this week accused Soriquez of receiving kickbacks from government projects. Key public works officials also withdrew their support from him for alleged weak leadership and insincerity.

SORIQUEZ

President Macapagal-Arroyo, meanwhile, has ordered incoming Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane to "crush cleanse" on corruption in one of the most profitable agencies of government.

"His main problem now is how to cleanse the DPWH, especially in the light of all of these mutual finding of charges," said the President in a speech to barangay officials.

She urged Ebdane to start cracking on "drawing a plan to attack the problem at the DPWH that involved "because he starts start cracking."

The President also defended her former national police chief from critics who have again raised the issue of corrupt militarization in the Cabinet.

"Definitely, he's an engineer, so that's recognized," she said.

In a statement, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said Ebdane was "tailor-fit to sustain the clean-up and streamlining of the DPWH."

Jerome Aning and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

Poison awards for river polluters to go nationwide

By Veh Contreras

INVITED by its initial success in dealing with polluting firms along the Pasig River, the annual "Lason sa Ilog Award" is going nationwide to expose business establishments found responsible for dirtying waterways.

"Lason" (poison) organizers, led by the Iloilo City Network and supported by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, are morphing "business river" beginning today in the clean-up campaign against factories and other establishments that lack waste water treatment facilities or otherwise dump their wastes into rivers, bays and streams.

The campaign is one of EDSA's projects in the run-up to the celebration of International Earth Day on April 22.

EDSA executive director Toby Tañada said that like the original award which had focused on polluting establishments lacking the Pasig River, the National Lason sa Ilog Award intends to "pressure" businesses near waterways into complying with the water quality treatment standards set by the DENR.

"From our experience, an industry can be forced to improve its operations after we have exposed it as a Lason awardee," said Tañada, a son of former Sen. Wigberto Tañada.

"Being identified as a Lason awardee has an impact on how consumers see a company. Marketing-wise, the [firm would] have to do something about that image," he added.

At a press conference in Quezon City yesterday, Tañada presented a virtual "who's who" of Philippine companies that had been slapped Lason awards since the election began in 1996.

The list included giant food companies Danddongsri chains, pastry shops, roasted chicken stands, specialty restaurants, shopping centers, glass and plastic plants, animal feed and textile factories, and even an association of hog raisers.

Former Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun, Tañada's predecessor at EDSA, observed that "naming public pressure on companies [through such mock awards] has actually proven more effective than actual... enforcement" of environmental laws.

The nomination period will run up to March 22. Parties that may nominate violators are local government units, academic institutions, nongovernment organizations, church and civic groups, and people's organizations.

For details, interested parties may call the Ilaglip Pasig Movement at 929-4650 loc. 2014, or (0919) 2765758; or e-mail at ilog_lasonaward@yahoo.com.

Nominated companies will be inspected, the complaints against them verified by technical experts, until the EDSA—which has some 3,000 affiliate groups nationwide—comes up with a short list of worst polluting firms to receive the awards.

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The most vicious crime in RP history

From page A1

a hundred thousand noncombatant men, women and children died. The overwhelming number of casualties were Filipinos, but the dead also included several orefriendly nationalities like the Swiss, Irish, Russian, Spanish, Germans and others. Among them nationals, Chinese and Indians suffered considerably.

The military casualties included almost all of the Japanese garrison of over 16,000 men, and about 1,000 dead and 5,500 wounded among the American forces of liberation.

Only city in Pacific destroyed

Manila was the only filled capital in the Pacific to be destroyed.

The American historian William Manchester recorded that 70 percent of utilities, 75 percent of factories, 80 percent of the southern residential district and 100 percent of the business district were razed. (**American Caesar**, p. 431.)

The Japanese did their utmost to make the city unlivable, dynamiting the bridges across the Pasig River, destroying utilities like electric power, telephones and public transportation (the streetcars were used as makeshift barricades, and even scrounging [and for three weeks succeeding] in ruining off the water supply).

Put six months after the battle, the stench of rotting corpses hung heavy over the ruins of the municipal metropolis.

Civilians slaughtered

Of all Allied cities in World War II, only Warsaw suffered more.

But Warsaw was destroyed as the result of an urban uprising starting on Aug. 1, 1944 by the Polish Home Army, with civilians fighting alongside, and the ruin resulted from the savage German reprisals that followed.

There was no such uprising in Manila. The civilians huddled fearfully in their homes and evacuation centers, but they were slaughtered anyway.

If Manila was second to Warsaw in terms of destruction, it was second to Nanking (now Nanjing) in the number of noncombatants it's Asia. There in December 1937, the Japanese raped, tortured and murdered more than 300,000 Chinese civilians, an atrocity that the Japanese government still denies.

Rape of Manila

The difference was that the rape of Nanking lasted longer (six weeks), and was perpetrated by a Japanese military on an occupied enemy of a foreign.

The rape of Manila, on the other hand, was committed by a Japanese military facing defeat and annihilation, and already on a frame of mind that was both desperate and suicidal. This had been seen on August in the summer of 1944, when even Japanese civilians performed suicide by the thousands. This would become even clearer in the subsequent battle for Okinawa, which dated from April into late June, marked by hundreds of kamikaze attacks, far more than the few dozen used during the Philippine battles.

Forms of killings

The killings in Manila took many forms. Eyewitness accounts were individual murders with shots to the head or by bayonet

THE JAPANESE decided to make Manila a battleground instead of declaring it an "Open City" as MacArthur had done in 1941 at this approach of the Japanese forces.

ting or beheading. Sometimes they were mutilations of whole families, or groups of people confined in buildings and blasted with tanks, grenades or flames. Women were raped, then sliced with bayonets from groin to throat and left to bleed to death under the open sun.

Children were seized by the legs and had their heads bashed against the wall. Babies were tossed in the air and caught on bayonet points, or skewered with bayonets on the ground and tortured into the air. Unborn fetuses were gouged out with bayonets from pregnant women.

'Instant comfort women'

The Manila atrocities were, in the words of Yamashita's defense counsel, "studded with rape." This was not only in connection with the killings, but in terms of basic ordinary gain into being what might be called "instant comfort women" to rape the hard desires of the last soldiers soldiery.

Sometimes was the case of the Bay View Hotel, which the Japanese filled with women liberated from their homes. Sometimes the women became victims of the Japanese despair, they took whatever defensive measures they could.

The younger girls were sent to the rear of the rooms, and the more mature women placed themselves nearer the entrance and offered themselves to the soldiers. Apparently delighted in their second more prominence, including Russian women from Shanghai who normally practiced the high end of the flesh market. At least one girl was spared because she was having her period.

Barbarities recorded

Filipino survivors have written about these barbarities. Jose Lourdes Reyes Mendiola, found chair of the Ateneo University, and Spanish author Antonio Perez de Olaguer has compiled the stories of many survivors.

There were also foreign eyewitnesses, like American couple Flora and Mona Lou Steiner, German Jewish refugee Wanda Tabeson, and Hungarian baillo personality Ferd Jarlard.

Manila could have been spared if, as Macarthur had done in December 1941, it had been declared an Open City. But Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita, overall Japanese ground commander in the Philippines, feuded all request by Filipino officials of the pitiable Occupation "republic" to make such a declaration.

Although he had pulled most of his forces to chew mountain redoubts and said he had decided not to defend Manila (but did

WITHOUT warning, the toll box for the North Luzon Expressway hit the roof and so did confused motorists traversing the expressway which opened for traffic on Thursday.

Motorists grumble over 400% hike in NLEX toll fees

From page B1

from Sta. Rita, P50; from Pulilan, P65; from San Simon, P120; from San Fernando, P140; from Angeles, P187, and from San, P203.

Others said that vans not collected at the Balintawak Bonbon (Balintawak), San Fernando and San Quinquagesimal gates at exclusive toward the day.

The said MOTC had anticipated a situation to which motorists would inquire about or argue over the new rates: "There will no of the need to [unload] more public information work on the benefit of using the new[NLEX]."

However, Ochoa said, no incidents of hostility occurred—a statement that Senior Supt. Nestor Belad, police operations chief in Central Luzon, confirmed.

'Dis-in,' etc.

But there was a picket at the Guiguinto gate in Bulacan as motorists demanded re-opening to tollfs.

In the San Fernando exit, some 100 members of the Kilusan para sa Pambansang Demokrasya and the Alyansa ng Manggagawa at Taxpayer Inilkat Labas sa TRAIN Toll held a "dis-in" before noon, according to KPD Central Luzon spokesperson Aurora Bisquil.

"The new rates are too much, in view of public projects and hours are among their small income go to the toll payment," Mylene spokesperson Tess Tolentino told the became by phone.

Arabbayan had set to protest action today, but conducted a picket as early as Wednesday.

'Exorbitant' rates

Bengzon Board Member Antolin Gonzales said the Provincial Board Members League in Central Luzon yesterday submitted a resolution to the Office of the President branding the "exorbitant" rates.

In Bulacan, protests complained that the previous P1/2 fee has been belong to Balintawak was now P75.

They said that even if a motorist had to take only the Marilao exit, a P75 toll fee was demanded because of MOTC's "closed system" policy.

The toll payment for all southbound motorists who enter by being is at the Bocaue toll plaza, except for those who will exit to Bocaue.

The toll payment for all southbound motorists who enter by being is at the Bocaue toll plaza, except for those who will exit to Bocaue.

The list of the rates under the "closed system" are posted in small letters only at the Bocaue toll plaza.

GMA declares Feb. 25 special nonworking holiday

From page A1

said Edsa I "restored our democratic institutions and ushered in meaningful political, social and economic reforms in the country."

"Whereas, it is but fitting and proper that the people of the Philippines be given full opportunity to honor the memory of the Edsa People Power Revolution with appropriate ceremonies," she lawyer said.

The President has asked the Edsa People Power Commission to prepare the activities to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the peaceful uprising.

Juliet Labog-Javellana

DepEd to continue GMA outstanding student awards

By Dona Pazzibugan

[illegible] student awards created in the name of President Macapagal-Arroyo will again be given out this year.

Education Secretary Florencio Abad has decided to continue the awards named "President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Award of Outstanding Achievement" that was introduced last year at the height of the presidential campaign.

A host of other special student awards are already given out during graduation.

These are usually sponsored by the local government officials and the school's benefactors.

Abad has ordered the principals in each of the 4,000 public high schools in the country to make sure he receives the awards.

The student's graduating school would get the presidential award for outstanding achievement in extra-curricular activities.

Last week Abad said he would be issuing instructions to the [illegible] schools.

The five categories of the presidential award are student leadership, campus journalism, athletics, culture and arts, and technology and environmentalism.

Like the last time, the presidential award will not come with a monetary reward.

The student awardees will just get a certificate with the personal seal of the Office of the President, and signed by the President and Abad.

By coming up with such award last March, the DepEd has been criticized for allowing public high schools to be used for Mr Macapagal's electoral bid.

Mr Macapagal's campaign was also criticized during graduation time in all colleges and universities and public elementary and high schools in March last year.

In his message, which contains a reference to the May elections, the President cited his achievements in education.

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The WORLD

Editor: Lucinda B. Rosca

Nokor announces it has made A-bombs

SEOUL—North Korea declared on Thursday for the first time that it possessed nuclear weapons and said it was suspending participation in six-nation talks on disarmament aimed at ending its nuclear ambitions.

The announcement sent out shockwaves among neighboring capitals, coming when some of the world's largest military powers have been trying to coax the intransigent communist North to return to talks aimed at ending its nuclear ambitions.

"We had already taken the resultant action of pulling out of the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) and have now increased weapons to cope with the Bush administration's overpowered policy to isolate and stifle the DPRK," the North's Korean Central News Agency quoted the Foreign Ministry as saying.

DPRK is short for the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The statement is the North's first official response since US President George W. Bush said in his inauguration speech on Jan. 20 that he was committed to ending tyranny.

While Bush did not specify countries, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has singled out North Korea as one of six that used practiced tyranny.

The tirade from the foreign ministry referred directly to US statements on Pyongyang's current hardline stance to cope with the Bush administration's overpowered policy to isolate and stifle the DPRK, "the North's Korean Central News Agency quoted the Foreign Ministry as saying.

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The tirade from the foreign ministry referred directly to US statements on Pyongyang's current hardline stance to cope with the Bush administration's overpowered policy to isolate and stifle the DPRK, "the North's Korean Central News Agency quoted the Foreign Ministry as saying.

"The Bush administration termed the DPRK, its dialogue partner, an outpost of tyranny, paving into the shade its hostile policy and totally rejected it," the ministry said.

"This deprived the DPRK of any justification to participate in the six-party talks," it said.

North Korea had sought a conciliatory gesture from the United States with the inauguration of Bush for his second term and the appointment of Rice as new secretary of state, analysts said.

However, the foreign ministry assured the nuclear arsenal was purely defensive and Pyongyang still wanted to use dialogue to rid the Korean peninsula of atomic weapons, KCNA said.

But it said it saw no compelling reason to return to the six-way talks until bellicose signs from the second Bush administration.

"We have insisted that six-party talks first we are compelled to suspend our participation in the talks for an indefinite period till we have recognized that there is justification for us to attend the talks," the foreign ministry said, adding it would join the resolutions conducive to positive results.

Washington has recently stepped up efforts to revive the six-party talks, sending an envoy to the region last week with Assistant Secretary of State for Asian, South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

The United States, China, South Korea, Japan and Russia have held three rounds of talks with North Korea since August 2003 and have been trying to coax Pyongyang back to the negotiations.

The latest crisis over the North's nuclear ambitions erupted in October 2002 when the United States said North Korea had admitted to a secret program based on highly enriched uranium as well as a plutonium scheme that it had long denied.

Pyongyang later denied having a uranium project. Relations remained cordial.

Reuters

SOUTH Korean Army soldiers patrol along the barbed-wire fence at the Imjingak Pavilion, near the demilitarized zone in Paroonmjom which separates South Korea from the North.

Timeline of Pyongyang's nuke bid

- DECEMBER 2001: US President George W. Bush warns Iraq and North Korea they would be "held accountable" if they develop weapons of mass destruction.
- Jan. 29, 2002: Bush labels North Korea, Iran and Iraq an "axis of evil" in his State of the Union address.
- Oct. 16: US officials say North Korea admits having a secret uranium enrichment program, key to development of nuclear weapons.
- Nov. 14: The US and its key Asian allies—Japan and South Korea—decide to halt oil supplies to North Korea promised under a 1994 deal.
- Dec. 12: North Korea announces it is reactivating nuclear facilities at Yongbyon that were frozen under the 1994 deal with the United States.
- Jan. 10, 2003: North Korea says it will withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.
- Feb. 6: North Korea says it has restarted its uranium facilities.
- April 27: US and North Korean envoys begin talks in Beijing to try to resolve standoff.
- April 28: North Korea tells US officials privately that it has nuclear weapons and may test, export or use them depending on US actions, according a senior American official. The North reportedly offers to give up its nuclear program in return for large economic aid.
- May 12: North Korea withdraws from a 1992 agreement with South Korea to keep the Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons.
- Aug. 27-29: North Korea joins the first round of six-nation talks on its nuclear program in Beijing, which includes China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States.
- Feb. 25-28, 2004: Second round of six-nation talks.
- June 23-26: Third round of six-nation talks.
- September: North Korea refuses to attend a planned fourth round of six-party talks, accusing the United States of "hostile" policies toward it.
- Jan. 18, 2005: US Secretary of State designate Condoleezza Rice refers to North Korea as one of the "outposts of tyranny" in the world requiring close attention.
- Feb. 2: Bush says his hope on North Korea, making only sure reference to it in his State of the Union address: "We are working closely with governments in Asia to convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions."
- Feb. 10: North Korea announces in a foreign ministry statement that it has nuclear weapons and—it is staying away from six-nation talks on ending the crisis.

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Car bomb blast ushers in Islamic new year in Baghdad

BAGHDAD—A car bomb exploded behind a US military patrol in central Baghdad on Thursday, killing at least two people, as Iraq marked its delayed announcing the results of the country's historic election.

Iraqi police struck as Iraqis marked the new Islamic year and as the US military announced plans to start bringing home the some troops sent to Iraq to guard voting stations.

The US patrol had just passed a four-wheel drive car in Tahrir square when it exploded, destroying three nearby cars but leaving the US patrol unscathed, witnesses said. Two people were killed and six injured, according to officials.

Another Iraqi civilian was killed in the city of Baquba to the so-called Sunni Triangle during a gunfight between police and rebels.

A mounting rebel campaign has cast a shadow over the euphoria from the Iraqi election. Scores of police and army have been killed since the Jan. 30 poll while policemen and journalists have been targeted for execution by shootings.

But authorities said the final results of the election were being delayed for recounts.

The results had been expected on Thursday but the Iraqi election commission said this had to be put back because votes in 2000 ballot boxes were being recounted.

"The checking of the votes is going on and the result will be known in a few days," commission official Farid Ayar said on Wednesday.

With just over half the estimated vote of about eight million announced, the main Shiite coalition, the United Iraqi Alliance, is leading by a lot so far, followed by a Kurdish coalition.

The United Iraqi Alliance now expects to ensure an overall majority in the new 275-member national assembly that will draw up a new constitution.

A US general announced that moves were underway to reduce troop numbers from the election peak.

Lt. Gen. Lance Smith said in Washington that between 10,000 and 12,000 US troops would leave in coming weeks bringing the total down to 135,000-140,000.

US officials at a Nato meeting in Brussels said at least half a dozen alliance nations have offered help for Iraq security forces.

Nato Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said ministers had agreed the 26-member grouping had "loaned a source" on Iraq since the elections.

A senior US state department official said six or seven Nato countries offered Pentagon day to help train Iraqi security forces to combat insurgents.

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ALIVE? A man lifted by an early morning car bomb in Tahrir square in central Baghdad, grieves over his body in the al-Kindi hospital in central Baghdad, Iraq Feb. 10. —

Bomb seen likely cause of UK plane crash in Iraq

LONDON—The crash of a British military transport plane in Iraq answered after the loss of its entire right wing and investigators believe a bomb planted by insurgents was the most "likely cause," the Sun newspaper reported Thursday.

The Sun reported that the entire right wing of the C-130 Hercules plane was torn off, sending the plane instantly into a violent spin and causing it to break up in about four seconds but could not save the pilot for the crash.

What was left of the plane spiraled and crashed into desolate marshland 30 km north-west of Baghdad, the mass-circulation daily said.

"A bomb now looks the most likely cause" of the Jan. 30 crash, a senior Royal Air Force source was quoted by the newspaper as saying.

"But sabotage is a another chilling possibility. Metal fatigue is another option but is considered much less likely. The suggestion that the plane was hit by a missile is a remote scenario," the source said.

Exploding ammunition or a missile would probably not have caused the wing to drop off, and the plane was probably out of missile range, they added.

A Ministry of Defense spokesperson refused to comment on the report. "We don't speculate when the findings of a board of inquiry have yet to be concluded," the spokesman said.

The bodies of the nine Royal Air Force aircrew and one soldier were flown into RAF Lyneham air base in southwest England on Thursday. It was Britain's largest single day loss of life since it helped launch the Iraq war in March 2003.

Meanwhile a senior US general said he believes the crash was due to an attack rather than a technical problem.

Lt. Gen. Lance Smith, deputy commander of the US Central Command in Iraq, emphasized that it was his personal impression, and not the result of the ongoing inquiry. AFP

US intel on Iran nuke program seen as meager

WASHINGTON—US intelligence is unlikely to know much about Iran's contentious nuclear program and would be vulnerable to manipulation by political enthusiasts intelligence officers and other experts say.

Amid an escalating war of words between Washington and Tehran, the experts say they doubt the CIA has been able to recruit agents with access to the small circle of clerics who control the Islamic Republic's national security policy.

Serious doubts also surround the effectiveness of an expanded intelligence role for the Pentagon, which if some intelligence officials are to be believed is preparing covert military forces to look for evidence new weapons of mass destruction in Iraq's shifting sands, now that no prewar Iraq.

"I will be highly astonished surprised if the United States has [what] appears] more in the aspect of pursuit," said Ray Takeyh, an Iran expert at the Council on Foreign Relations.

"They don't even know who the second-tier Revolutionary Guards are," he added.

Doubts about US intelligence on Iran have arisen amid talk of possible military action by the United States or Israel against suspected nuclear weapons facilities.

Former chief weapons inspector David Kay, thrilled to declare US intelligence on weapons of mass destruction at Iraq's failure, warned that the Bush administration again relying on evidence from the shifting sand that is present Iraq.

"The tendency is to, from the intelligence to support the political argument," Kay said in a CNN interview on Wednesday.

He added that the CIA has not to give US policymakers an up-to-date comprehensive intelligence assessment on Iran.

"We're talking about military action against Iran and we don't have a national intelligence estimate that shows what we do know what we don't know and the basis for what we think we know," Kay said.

Problems arose for US intelligence in Iraq, in part, because of a country agent in the Islamic revolution, when Washington cut diplomatic ties in breaking the seizure of the American Embassy by student radicals.

Richard Perle, the influential neoconservative thinker who was a driving force behind the US-led invasion of Iraq, said intelligence suffered a major setback in Iran until the arrest of about 40 agents in the mid-1990s.

"So I understand it, virtually no reliable network in Iran was in place," Perle recently told the House of Representatives intelligence committee.

"I think we're in very much that shape in Iran," he said.

Some intelligence analysts argue a preemptive strike is the only way to delay Iranian nuclear weapons development, despite the Bush administration's public emphasis on diplomacy.

Veteran former US charge that there is nothing nuclear weapons and Iraq wanted that a fill in knock strike would only accelerate its program underground.

US intelligence has had a huge credibility problem ever since that previous Iraq possessed large stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons and was pursuing nuclear arms.

The assertions were made prior to the 2003 US invasion, but are such weapons have been found.

"If US intelligence was bad in Iraq, and it was disastrous, it's probably going to be worse vis-à-vis Iran," said Richard Russell, a former CIA analyst who now heads the National Defense University.

The link of escalating verbal agression to Iran leaves immense burden power by a secretive decision making hierarchy and widespread mistrust of the US government, experts said. Reuters

Watchdog to tag IRA for $50-M bank robbery

BELFAST—The Irish Republican Army's political ally Sinn Fein could be facing crackdown on Thursday when Northern Ireland's executive watchdog publishes a report on a massive bank robbery blamed on the guerrilla group.

A special report from the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) is widely expected to say the IRA was behind a £26.5 million (US$49 million) robbery at the headquarters of Northern Bank which has provoked a political crisis in Belfast.

The IMC—set up by Britain and Ireland to rule on whether rival paramilitary groups are sticking to peace pledges—can recommend punishments against political parties linked to organizations it deems guilty of ceasefire transgressions.

Sinn Fein, the largest Catholic party in Northern Ireland, was forced by Britain after the IMC's first report in April last year recommended financial sanctions over alleged IRA activity.

The watchdog, whose four members are appointed by London, Dublin and Washington, also warned it might soon be asking Sinn Fein figures it believed were also senior members of the IRA.

Any action against Sinn Fein is certain to further erode an already tenuous political atmosphere, and Britain may delay announcing what action it will take.

"I don't think we are going to rush into making a response," said one British source.

The Tuesday 6 am December 20 raid has dealt a huge blow to Anglo-Irish efforts to haul the running of the British-ruled province back to its divided Protestant and Catholic parties.

Protestant unionists—who support the union with Britain—are refusing to share power with Sinn Fein until the IRA disbands, and London and Dublin have accused the IRA of blocking progress by clinging to paramilitary and criminality.

Last week the IRA responded to the criticism by saying it was withdrawing its conditional offer to disarm—made during elected negotiations late last year—and accused Britain and Ireland of "making a mess of the peace process."

Although the violence which claimed more than 3,600 lives in Northern Ireland over 30 years has largely stopped, politics has been deadlocked since 2002 when a regional government set up to share power between the two communities broke down. Reuters

ALONE WITH THE WIND AND SAND
A woman takes a morning walk in Ocean Park Beach in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Dec. 28, 2004.

Basque separatist bomb blast hurts 42 in Madrid

MADRID—A car bombing claimed by the Basque separatist ETA injured 42 people in a Madrid business district on Wednesday, hours before King Juan Carlos was due to arrive in the area, the interior ministry said.

The blast, which dealt a fresh blow to efforts to defuse ETA's two-decade campaign for Basque independence, came as 24 people suspected of belonging to the banned organization were arrested in a major antiterrorist sweep.

Prime Minister José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero condemned the "terrorist" attack, which took place at 9:30 a.m. and was first media reports following into the day. 30 minutes after an anonymous caller claiming to represent ETA alerted the Basque newspaper Gara, police said.

The car bomb exploded seven earlier, was parked outside the Spanish headquarters of the French conglomerate company Hull, and the blast shattered the building's windows onto five streets, an interior ministry spokesperson said.

Despite the telephone alert, police did not have time to order an evacuation although they managed to circulate of the area before the explosion, according to the regional government of Madrid. Gas canister, officials.

Twenty-four of the injured were inside the Hull offices. Most of them suffered cuts from broken glass while damaged cars and AFP

Prince Charles to marry longtime lover Camilla

LONDON—Prince Charles announced Britain by announcing Thursday that he will marry Camilla Parker Bowles, his longtime lover whom Princess Diana blamed for the breakdown of her marriage to the heir to the throne.

Clarence House, Charles' office, announced that the pair would marry but gave no further details. Sky News TV reported that the wedding would take place on April 8.

Charles divorced from Diana in 1996, a year before she was killed in a Paris car crash. Camilla divorced her husband Andrew Parker Bowles in 2005.

Charles, the eldest son of Queen Elizabeth II, first met Camilla at a polo match in Windsor in 1970 and over the next few years their bonding grew close. The relationship cooled after Charles joined the Royal Navy and Camilla married Andrew Parker Bowles, a long-standing acquaintance.

Throughout the late 1970s Charles and Camilla kept up contact and became close friends again around the end of the decade. They continued to date Charles' 1981 marriage to Diana.

Diana blamed the friendship for the failure of her marriage to the Prince of Wales. "There were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded," Diana said in a 1995 TV interview.

In 1994, Prince Charles admitted in a TV documentary that he had cheated from his marriage vows, but insisted the infidelity happened only after the marriage was "irretrievably broken down, as both having acted." It was widely assumed, but never confirmed, that Camilla was the other woman.

Camilla soon became a recognizable figure and in April 1997 took a surprise step into public life when she became patroness of the National Osteoporosis Society. An official photograph was released to mark the occasion. In July that year, Charles hosted a party for Camilla to celebrate her 50th birthday.

The couple appeared less frequently in public after Diana's death in August 1997, but in 1999 Camilla met Charles' sons Prince William and Prince Harry for the first time.

In recent years, she has regularly accompanied Charles to polo and become accustomed to appearing in front of the media. She now lives with Charles at his Clarence House residence in central London.

Their planned marriage is nevertheless a sensitive issue because Parker Bowles is divorced and her former husband is still alive. Charles would be the supreme governor of the Church of England if he took the throne, and some Anglicans remain opposed to remarriage of divorcees.

The church officially married Charles and Diana, but it was Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey who really urged the couple to marry. AP

PRINCE Charles and Camilla

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BBC woman journalist shot dead in Somalia

MARGO—Britain, Somali officials and a press freedom watchdog expressed shock and indignation on Thursday at the fatal shooting of a British journalist in the lawless Somali coastal city of Kismayo on Wednesday.

Kate Peyton, a 39-year-old BBC producer, died while undergoing surgery in Mogadishu's Medina hospital after she was gunned down by unknown attackers outside a hotel, just hours after arriving in the battle-scarred city.

Britain's Foreign Office said it was "shocked and saddened" by Peyton's death and offered condolences to her friends and family, noting that she had traveled often with Foreign Secretary Jack Straw.

"She will be greatly missed," a Foreign Office spokesperson told Reuters shortly after reports the Peyton was killed.

Peyton was in Mogadishu to join foreign reporters covering a fact-finding visit to the capital by a team of Somali lawmakers assessing conditions there for the relocation from exile in Kenya of the nation's transitional government.

Transitional Prime Minister Mohamed Ali Gedi, who has announced the government would begin to relocate to Somalia on Feb. 15, described the killing as a "savage act."

"I was saddened by the killing of the innocent journalist," he said by telephone from Nairobi. "Those behind the killing will be punished. Local authorities are instructed to investigate the matter."

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) condemned what it termed a "reprehensible attack" and called on the transitional government to fully investigate the killing and prosecute the perpetrators.

"My images the loss of our colleague Kate Peyton and condemn that reprehensible attack on an innocent person who was trying to report on an important international story," it said in a statement received here.

"We call on authorities and the newly elected federal government in Somalia that Peyton's killers are swiftly found and brought to justice," CPJ Executive Director Ann Cooper said.

Peyton was chief for unknown gunmen outside her hotel in Mogadishu on Wednesday according to police and medical officials.

Witnesses said the gunmen, who sped off in a white saloon car, targeted her after an 20 minute from the Sahafi Arabic for journalist Hotel in southern Mogadishu. AFP

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Strange bedfellows

EDITORIAL

WITHOUT realizing it, the Marcos family and human rights victims have become strange bedfellows. In the wake of the decision of a United States court upholding in effect the Philippine Supreme Court order forfeiting $683 million of Marcos assets from Swiss accounts in favor of the government, both the Marcos family and the human rights victims, who are demanding the $683 million be used to indemnify their claims, have called on the government to make the payments.

Through his lawyer, Deputy Shorty Gon, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. has said that he supports the class action suit of the rights victims, but stressed that he's not legally obligated to pay for his father's debt. "The Philippine government is responsible for providing the money," he said, denying that the Marcoses have the personal assets to satisfy the claims.

The denial, of course, is weak. The Marcoses, their relatives and their cronies have continued to live in extravagance. For them to live more modestly would violate the lavish life philosophy.

The human rights victims do not believe the Marcoses' silver. But they agree that the government should pay them. The Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), which supports the cause of the rights victims, said the government must recognize the victims through a presidential proclamation, declare them as heroes, and compensate them with money either from the Marcos accounts or the national budget.

We don't know what "national budget" the rights victims are talking about, but if they are talking about the $60 billion in debt that were loaned over to the Philippines, the amount remains unpaid-interest and amortization-and it would remain so until all litigation concerning conflicting claims stops. It should likewise be remembered that the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law mandates that all recovered Marcos assets should go to bankroll the program. For the government to use the Marcos deposits to indemnify the rights victims would require a legislative amendment.

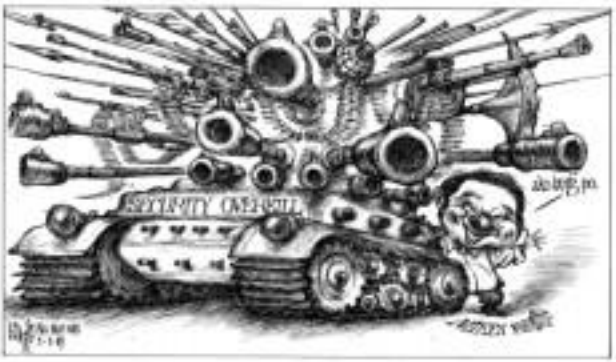
It is worrisome that the rights victims and the Marcos family are now pressuring the government for compensation when there's not enough discussion on the implications of such a move. Although the Arroyo administration has put it on record that it has set aside a portion of the Marcos accounts for indemnity, it hardly seems to have thought out the constitutional ramifications.

Why should human rights victims be compensated by money that comes from the Filipino, stolen from them by the grand larceny of the Marcos regime? The TFDP head herself said that the Philippine government should apologize to the victims of martial law because it "allowed itself to be used for fascist repression and economic plunder." Surely she knows that the Marcos assets are money plundered from the people. If so, why should stolen money be used to pay Marcos' victims? Why not let the Marcoses pay the victims?

In the same way why should the national budget be used to compensate the victims? The budget is drawn from the taxes paid by Filipinos, and even if most of it came from domestic and international borrowings, the borrowings still constitute a sovereign debt that the Filipinos must pay for. To use the budget to indemnify the victims would be tantamount to saying that the Filipino taxpayers themselves perpetrated the abuses. It would be as ridiculous as shooting one's foot and making the other foot pay for the damage.

The word "compensation" seems to have a bad taste in the mouth. Why should those who were persecuted and tortured during martial law be paid? Wouldn't that trivialize the ordeal they suffered? Wouldn't it be better to use the Marcos accounts for a humanitarian program that would provide assistance to the victims and their kin and friends, ease their trauma and sufferings, lessen their rehabilitation, and generally foster a spirit of reconciliation with history and all its flaws and despicableness?

To be sure, all Filipinos suffered during the Marcos regime, and they deserve relief and indemnity. But unlike the Jews victimized by the Nazi genocide, and even the Filipinos victimized by Japanese atrocities during World War II, Filipinos cannot be "compensated" for their sufferings with money that's had been plundered by Marcos. Filipinos cannot indemnify themselves with money they themselves own. Compensation given in such a manner is no relief or indemnity. It's an insult.



Love songs at Front Page on V Day

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

LAST Feb. 2, this column asked questions on the commercial bidding for Napocor's Masinloc power plant. The winning bidder was YNN, whose capitalization has been confirmed to be only P1 million. Its winning bid was P864 million.

This week, my good friend Ilac Cano, vice president for corporate communications of Meralco, faxed answers to those questions prior by points. In fairness to Meralco, I am quoting those answers.

1. Meralco denied allegations that Meralco is close to the bidder for the Masinloc plant, pointing out only TSPI. He said:

"2. Meralco has no business relationship with YNN. You mentioned YNN owners having ties as a reputed Meralco executive tried to lose investors of our president, for the record, Mr. that was untrue as employees reach less on executives of Meralco. Mr. computer. [Illegible] Corp.) used to find out our unused Meralco water rights, registered in the individual member-firms Columbia Wire and Cables. Based on our records, the last stated (P1,382,000) to him was in July 2000. In 1995, he was the president of a small power, Shareson Mobile Power Corp. which registered in the name of Mr. Angeles as a shareholder. BY Natasha Mr. but is known to our executives. The company has since been acquired and is now a subsidiary of East Asia Power Resources Corp. Its new president and CEO is Mr. Arthur Ty Mobile."

2. He denied that there are re-ongoing negotiations with YNN insofar as a power supply contract is concerned. "To link Meralco with the power issues getting investors price bid by Mr. Mobile is not true. The PSA is a power sales agreement, which Meralco is bidding to secure with Napocor, is unfair and totally false. There is no [illegible] to sound out and [illegible] nor can this connection between the bidding of power supply and projects with the power plants to supply customer. Our power supply agreement which our suppliers is based solely on the best price we obtain, which will eventually redound to the benefit of our customers. There is no connection between our bidding for power supply and our potential investment."

3. You also asked if YNN and Green Pacific would have had such a higher price if they were not assured of binding 4-power supply contracts with Meralco and I added that there is no assurance that the public will not be charged a higher generation rate when Meralco and YNN negotiate their separate supply contract.

"For the record, Meralco had absolutely nothing to do with the bidding by Shareson. Again, no emphasis that in drug Meralco involves investments in totally unlike. Let me reiterate for the record that we have no existing negotiations with YNN and Green Pacific to re-assume this PSA and Green Pacific are going to land separate supply contract with Meralco is totally false.

"4. You said that this office should visit Meralco's website to compare the price of Napocor's offer's company should. We viewed also Meralco incorporated a Shareson PS per kilowatt hour rate with Quezon Power and plant similar to Masinloc at the rates they could buy power from Napocor's power supply contract per kwh.

"5th here time and again stated, this comparing the cost of Napocor's case with Quezon Power or our other IPPs is unfair. The rate of Napocor is artificially low. Further, as we have been saying, Napocor's rate is 20% to 30% lower than Quezon had at contracts levels resulting in a higher rate per kWh. It is the consumer as ratepayer who ultimately pays for the differences between the artificial Napocor rate and the true cost of IPPs. The latest Napocor increase of 90-centavos per kWh hour rate and P1.25 per kWh is the latest grid subdivers this bar. In fact, they have a pending petition to hike their rates again this year. On the other hand, if our IPPs have been dependent on contract levels, it would have resulted in 42 centavos per kWh savings to Meralco consumers.

"5. Lastly, it is also our view that we have a negotiated power supply contract with a 2200 kW annual gas power project in Batangas.

"Finally, I wish to state that we have very successfully set up our bidding procedures about Meralco. These may be proven that are aimed on serving the Manila's consumers and in order to address their needs foremost. It is to our best interest that we invest in this type of projects to achieve their ends."

Now that we have read Meralco's side, I would like to ask one last question: Those are only two bidders, YNN and Para Gas. The latter's bid is P700 million, below the minimum bid price of P800 million. Therefore, there is only one qualified bidder, YNN. If so, is it not denied bidding?

This Monday, the Valentine's Day offering of Front Page gimme bar is an offer doesn't consist of love songs by singing stars Kiri Valencia, Mavi Sotto, Juan Rodrigo, the atbeat-with pioneer named singer and a be another special participation of a pop icon, Ramon Jacinto. Today's Valentine Senior, Manila, opposite the National Library.

Admission is free. Pay only for your drinks.

The painting and sculpture exhibits of Malang and Belle Lluch, respectively, are still on display at the Galleria Duemila's art gallery and clubhouse on the third floor. Interested members can now play billiards and have free coffee at the clubhouse. Items on the menu, aside Vi'orbe their course [illegible] Filipino dishes, the specials menu-pepper's and magazines in Pablo Manila, down dates, and play dame, cards, dam' dice, dominoes, checkers, scrabble, etc.

Eighth Route Monday being Valentine's Day when most people will be preoccupied with making their valentines hearts, there will be no Eighties in Manila [Hotel]. The next Eighties will be on Feb. 21.

History's cruelty to forgotten heroes

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul L. Lambino

FOR the musical late summer version, the unbroken cut of off is to being misunderstood.

They had defied their foes, the invasion of their families, and the pattern of history. They had saved with the pattern of history, in those dark days when being a freedom fighter promised no reward save the joy of living by one's conscience. And now they are pensioned in having bargained for their cause, forgiven and unpunished, eager to see them banished on the basis declared by the Supreme Court as having been found from the public coffers.

Could they have imagined that they would have to fighting a "pensioned struggle" not in the common cause for the unmanned? How painful still is that their own words reflected in Ukiyoto has been used as example of Philippine sovereignty the day for which they endured meritorious outside, the very flag whose colors they have given their justice. Why the tragic irony of that?

There are two separate lines of cases. The first is the claim before a Honolulu court filed by 9,000 human rights victims against the Marcos estate. The litigation was based on a leading 1986 Hi case, the Trajano v. Pena [case], wherein a $1 case cited the Alien Tort Claims Act, a 1789 law which empowered American courts to try human rights violations committed abroad, even when both the victims and the victims are foreign nationals not in litigation, violations not jurisdictional link to the forum. The Filipino claimants won a $2 billion award for compensation. That judgment stands. It remains unchecked.

The second line of cases addresses the question of who enjoys the funds recovered from these trials. The Philippine Supreme Court has declared that all the ill-gotten wealth "supposedly acquired from the government itself" [can] be all assets and properties they belong to the state "until such time as returned to the public treasury." To complicate things further, these funds, once recovered, are earmarked by Philippine law exclusively for agrarian reform. Again, the irony that the fallen warriors of a

(Turn to page 10)

Opposition remains in disarray

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

For all its good intentions of reconstituting the pre-martial-law political system, August's political experiment was sandwiched in an electoral system that has an experiment with the primaries that are so successful and dominated by the "administration party" without such a system and without a two-party system, the experiment had no chance of working in an electoral system in which the UNO post-Marcos democratic opposition explicitly encourages the emergence of a multi-party system.

The result was that the selection of Pro as the opposition candidate was perceived by Lacson and his allies in the LDP party chiefly Mehol Sadi, Agapito Aquino, to be a conclusion reached by party leaders from above and not reflecting the opinion from below.

The decline of Pro, which was financed by deposed's allies on Lacson's refusal to step down in favor of Pro, thereby splitting the non-Arroyo votes, has set committee opposition to dust today.

The move to cut out Angara from the fund-raising function efforts has been the last straw that led to Angara's decision to withdraw from the presidential race. Angara formally is to withdraw in the move Lakmudan, Bayanihan, Inc. Angara Bayanihan, has said his father was trying to patch up differences between Angara and Lacson to prevent a unified opposition bolted.

Lacson loyalists out of the LDP drifted the cable. His foes inside the LDP don't appear to have enough number to oust him yet.

Lacson and loyalists contend that Angara does not have support in the opposition party enough to challenge the administration's move down to move of his collaborative money in some of the administration's programs, including his vote in the Senate on the administration's tax measures, among them, the increases in the value-added tax and the "sin" tax on cigarettes and alcoholic drinks. Angara has said his cooperation with the administration is based on the issue from "my conscience" and that he will not be "bought" by the middle, insidious, independent of any entanglements or obligations to those we can choose pro-people we would support."

Angara has held the LDP together through three presidential elections since 1992. The LDP served as the machinery of the Partido ng Masang Pilipino, the ruling coalition under which Joseph Estrada won his presidency in 1998. It again served as the machinery of the Koalisyon ng Katipunan ng Pilipino under which Fro lost his presidency in 2004. After Fro's defeat, the LDP disbanded.

The worst thing that the opposition can do it is disunite as party structure upon which it can mobilize their disciplined political strength in the front of President Macapagal-Arroyo, and work toward winning the next presidential election.

The opposition should by now have not only a credible leader but more as a common position on the issues that unite the opposition parties. Opposition lawmakers have united on issues on each measure individually rather than espousing a party position.

Lacking a cohesive approach and leadership, opposition members have divorced their ethics to enact a sporadic switch of standards and of bread-line grabbing issues such as grounds for the increase issues of the Executive.

The test to say that the opposition should close its eyes to scandals, corruption cases and controversial violations, but call for impeachment action require serious marshalling of evidence to set the process in motion. Congress becoming servants only to the opposition's call.

There is enough work, however, for the opposition to do in checking the administration in the areas of the measures designed to spur economic growth, including the tax reform agenda, despite dissent on higher priority and the immediate aversion of the opposition.

Pioneering women

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

Beyond its charity work, though, Association Feminicana was instrumental in the "social transformation" of Filipino women. It's sorry been pinned a key role (in conjunction with Asociacion Feminicana Filipina, founded a year later in Manila) in the struggle for suffrage, right to vote and the passage of legislation for women's rights, and which has enabled "in the creation of perhaps Asia's most politically-informed and climate women's movement."

* * *

A COALITION of women from government and non-government groups, called the NGO-GO National Network of the Feminist Centennial will launch its year-long round of activities with a benefit dinner-concert, "100 Years of Women and Hands" on Sunday, Feb. 20 at 5:30 p.m. at the gardens of the Sofa de Lacbe compound on Scout Lazcano Street in Timog.

On the occasion, the PhP5-00 National network will give awards of recognition to "women and women's groups who contributed the feminist movement over the last hundred years." Special recognition will be given to the late Rep. Leticia Ramos Shahani, Concepcion Feria de Calderon y de Rodrigues and Pura Villanueva Kalaw in addition, 17 women, who campaigned for suffrage, have been given the honor of being "centennialized" by naming streets after them. They are: Encarnacion Alonso, Librada Avelino, Salvador Araneta Lopez, Minerva Gonzales (under the one surviving members), Pilar Hidalgo Lim, Josefa Jara Martinez, Sotero Laurel, Trinidad Legarda, Maria Lidasan Lucod, Clemencia Lopez, Rosa Sta. Maxima Rustia, Consuelo de Polavieja, Rita Roberts Sanchez, Bella Reyes de Reyes, Rosa Sevilla Alonso, Maria C. Manahan and Geronima Pecson.

Special offices will also be given to four early "feminine men," who championed the arts, language and legislative work, the rights of women. They are: Epifanio de los Santos, Rafael Palma and Jaime Hilario Fileman Bona and Miguel Cuaderno.

Eighteen pioneering organizations espousing feminist principles, including the rights and welfare of women, will likewise be recognized. These are in order of founding: National Federation of Women's Clubs, YWCA, Philippine Association of Women Lawyers, Girl Scouts of the Philippines, Iligan Bible Phi, Civic Assembly of Women of the Philippines, aka NCWP, Unida, Bangsamoro, Bahaqui, Philippine, BSA, Center for Women's Resources, Bahai Spiritual Assembly of the Philippines, Women Health Care Philippines (TWHAP), The Red Ribbon of Filipino Women (S.T.O.P.), Gabriela, Concerned Women of the Philippines, Women's Health Care Foundation, Women's Bank of the Philippines, Inc., Philippine Women Centered Health Care Foundation.

Pioneer institutions that promoted women's education will also be cited: Instituto de Mujeres, Mabini Doctors College, Centro Escolar de Senoritas, Philippine Normal College (Teachers University), and Philippine Women's University.

Descendants of the individual awardees and representatives of the awardee institutions are invited to attend the celebration of the NGO-GO network (Tel Nos. 735-3687 or 736-4404, ask for Lily) as soon as possible.

* * *

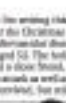
DANCE enthusiasts are invited to come and watch "Dance Anyone" at the SP Theater (Intramuros) Saturday, at 4 p.m., the second "Back-to-back" concert of the Mikhail College High School Prep Squad and "Kayawanihan," the Mapúa Institute of Technology.

My sister Crissy Tan-Cardenas, a member of the MCHS Prep Squad, managed to raise one arm to watch her son's performance and while we may have gone their own at a series of family tragedies, we were entertained and teeing about the young dancers' abilities and the magnificent production values.

Tickets are at Php100/175.00 each and should be available at the gate.

Heart talk

I'll February, the month of hearts, has the setting risk of, since thinking about how much you, your the Christmas holidays. I have it inside who chocolate's rather than diabetes. This last holiday season (but a friend, aged 52. The holidays of 2002 were particularly difficult. I had a close friend, only 38 at the time, who had a massive heart attack as well as one acquaintance who had a stroke. Both survived, but still under blood last but husband in a stroke.



PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

I've observed this the impetus in three events have taken on qualities of religious worship, with as many lining and guilt feelings. The comparison to me that is especially strong in one case, were such our religious beliefs built heavily around notions of sin and punishment.

Dear Christmas holiday feasts, the conversations in virtually every social running the latest version of heart disease. People around the table inspired, "Ate, I heard," while waving down with guilty as a plateful of turkey. In hospital corridors, relatives and friends share their heads after visiting the victim, whispering about how to and so was such a heavy smoker or had high cholesterol.

The parents, too, goes through long and hard and nourishing, wondering what to or else did wrong. The main culprit... I have sinned, I have sinned—am followed by a vow to be both again into a life without cigarettes and heavy foods, and more exercise for seven, please.

Industry

In decade, lifestyle changes are necessary tools to prevent heart disease as well as to help survivors to recover. But I would want, too, against the modern's that emerges on the part of partners as caregivers, especially when they women in her varsity and stroke victims.

The doctors and nutritionists strike because someone did something "wrong" has done are people, too, who have feelings and hurt by healthy lifestyles but still get stressed or heart attacks. I have a very close relative who has had three attacks in effective muscle (sometimes known as "mini-strokes") within a few months, even if she rarely ate meat, worked to least a thousand steps a day and never smoked in her life. A married one she had a family history of strokes, and she'd said to be a smoker, "Doctor, and inevitable," her cardiologist told me.

But can you blame people for worrying too much? The real league who had a Christmas heart attack has been suffering unbelievable stress for several months because of neighbor-hot-guns who are the model home on the street he preached, but I wonder, given the seriousness of the intrigues, how anyone could give one single to sleep.

I have to emphasize again that I believe in healthy lifestyles, too helping people to create stress-filled but will require more than an appetizer guide-lookings. In the case of my relative who had three massive strokes, I learned one with the very positive aspects of her lifestyle, pointing one than her long walks and lively reunions she probably helped her to overcome severe attacks.

Talking good old superior was going to be important to help reduce her risks for more serious strokes, but we then needed to do more. I kept telling her that I was confident it wasn't going to be easy to just stop worrying. In the same time, there was much we could tap from her existing lifestyle. Her long walks were actually fun going to Mass, but I pointed out that she could take strides for a purpose, in terms of stress.

Reaction

I've noticed me how few Age therapies are coming into the picture, going vegetarian, doing yoga and meditation. Again, all that is fine with me, but I also worry as there about how these practices lose their original source of social components, and instead become very individualistic quests for health.

It's certain that observations a step further, I keep hearing stories about people who are vegetarians and who meditate and do yoga and tai chi and all that, and are can be overzealously adhere to people around them. It's one effect, people start to complain about the case of "friends" who would take away one of their meditation and vegetarian meals, or most people needing to use the toilet for (last) use. If people detest, politely or inside, she would snap, "Can't you see I'm meditating?" "I'm sure she had a healthy heart, even if at the cost of breaking other people's hearts.

It's interesting, too, how some medical studies are disputing the claim that much stress Type A and Type B personalities. Originally, they thought that it was Type A people—the aggressive, aggressive workaholic types—who were more prone to heart disease than the more laid back Type B personalities. Now there are other studies suggesting Type A personalities may have a lower problem because they express their frustrations, their anger, about they feel it. It's the healthy and the meek, suffering in silence, that might end up with a heart attack.

To minimize this, I often suspect that the stress will people in the world probably are or very low risk for heart disease because they have to guilt, know no ruthless. Put another way, the issue of healthy hearts has no relevance for the heartless.

Elephants

All this talk about "learning to relax" and "avoiding stress" actually becomes absurd right after a heart attack or stroke, unless there is an immediate stress that caused the problem. The friend who had a heavy smoke told me how, as he was wheeled into the emergency room, he felt like an elephant was sitting on his chest. After the doctors injected him with a drug for the heart attack, it was almost as if the elephant got up and left his chest.

But other times, when happening, he wondered if the doctors warning his older brother that if he beat drugs failed, there'd have to insert another intravenous, and that the next would be to shoot half a million.

"Oh, Mike," my friend told me, "I could feel the elephant moaning back at and jumping back on his chest." I can thing how he gave that feeling again, even if only to help elephants, whatever he has to pay the many medicines prescribed to him.

One last anecdote here: I had to take over part of my friend's coaching load and administrative responsibilities, which has left people around me to assume, too. Hey, you might be the next one to get a heart attack, I often caution. "Sacrificing for them? The least I can do is that I would be more stressed out if I just shrugged my shoulders and avoided taking on the supposed tasks.

Life's too short. If we are to be responsible, it shouldn't be just because of our hearts but because we respect life and want to avoid creating pain and suffering. If we take more of our tasks and responsibilities, it should be to reflect on how we might become kinder, more helpful to people around us. For survivors of heart attacks and strokes, the attitude should be, "I survived. No stress regarding. Life must go on and I will live, more fully, for my friends and my family."

Take heart and live again, with a vengeance.

Resilience

COMMENTARY

Nono Alonzo, S.J.
Institute on Church and Social Issues

ed 28 lessons last year in various social sectors, dubbed "Dito Batulli, Dito Dinalo." Pedro shows he realized that although we are not limited, we may, realize it in the future.

Hours his own research and from his classes and retreats, Father Gonzalez shares what have surfaced as the ways or means in which people become resilient. The most important thing, he says, is a sense of meaning. Without a sense of meaning, people succeed if they are still not some meaning to their lives amid their experience of darkness. In their capacities and not mainly or simply belief in a God who cares unconditionally people are resilient.

Gandhi's motto, he says, is a case of faith in oneself. If people can still identify their internal resources, connect with their spirit or the God that dwells within them (the "Immanent"), they are able to get through life.

Thirdly, work or activity or source have simple or small, help them move on. Products in the lives of others is also known in the article.

Finally, the support of family and friends or other people is obvious advantage. The sense of unity or solidarity with others knows the spirits of many to rise.

Working on these issues, Father Gonzalez, through Caritas, has embarked on two "multi-year" projects will commence with his work on resilience. The first one is Basa, which stands for "Bayan Ikaapat Sa Abot Tanaw." It is a campaign to strengthen the capacity of literacy groups and promote a culture of reading, especially among the poor. His last lectures explain the objectives of the program.

"Our objective is to build the nation by building kingdoms. When you can imagine, you can see possibilities. You can see possible solutions, for example for the country. To be able to think out of the box, to open your imagination. Many times we are in a box or we live in a box, what is happening to the country. If we therefore deepen its imagination on broadening the horizons of our people.

One is interested of what Bonifacio Gonzalez actually is doing right now. He is working with the Philippines in that he will tell us. Imagine ourselves as our tasks. We are as 250,000 as the 7,000 islands.

Father Gonzalez refers to his idol, Jose Rizal, who said that consciousness leads to national identity and self knowledge leads to love for one's country. "We look down on ourselves," Father Gonzalez continues, "but in the studies, there are many Filipinos who are resilient. We can learn much from them. Reading studies of mother we are too slow. There are a few who have achievements and survival stories."

The second project is creatively dubbed "Ignite! (Sagip)." It is a program or workshops on leadership in which Father Gonzalez aims to bring in senior people in leadership positions (the age or elders) to share their experiences in such actions, especially in poverty. The objective of the workshop is basically three—the virtues of confidence in times of crisis, of contemplation, of servanthood to and service, of stewardship of community resources and of solidarity. The team of facilitators will be made up of students. We want to penetrate among the people but teachers do not about penetrate the dependent."

Like Rizal, Ignite is done by developing imagination by learning from inspiring experiences and stories. Father Gonzalez following "management lessons," Father Gonzalez says: "Rather than a dumbed ordinary, I would say that we are a culture in search of a soul, in search of to soul, for the God that dwells within us. We are the Filipino have a split personality for that is just a slogan and, as in psychology, the solution is that it is to go to some solutions, especially the good things, the good news about ourselves. If we are to become back as a people, we have to recover our soul."

'Wet flag' violates rights of pedestrians

IT STINKS of politics. This "wet flag" scheme of Jaypee Fernando. But why stop there? Why don't we redo the journalist's whole week? Just get some crack water, piss Kitchie, the swishy kind, full of bacteria, dampen the "flag" with it, and make the offending party ask for a swab. That'll really catch him.

Let's not stop there. But, anyway and our drivers making a traffic infraction? Forget the ticket book, get out the binoculars! Let's see him drive around making sure the word bigger flags for those sidewalk enemies, big enough to cover their asses and customers to wear where those pesky pedestrians and general public transport riders wait at the curb, we can erect permanent poles with a 20% love bonus that can accommodate a huge wet flag, and when each loser comes over to the booth is to speak, and drench hundreds of people in one swipe.

I tell you, this idea of Fernando really has potential. We must implement this in elementary and high schools, too. Teachers and principals will have blankets in a drum full of water ready to clue when an erratic student acts up—spike! We are done, bugs, mosquitoes, cell phones and all. That'll really teach him/her.

Child has a runaway? Spike! Late for work? Spike! Won't eat your vegetables? Spike! Bought pirated DVDs? Spike! Slapped one with two boys too late? Spike!

Let's not stop there. Why not use those Airsoft guns, you know, the paintball weapons, to mark the offending pedestrians with paint, conveniently labeling them as criminals just for the rest of the day?

OK, how about this: Save the MMDA savvy a bunch of silver or saw solutions and paint it on the backs of the offender in a few enough industry solution, this will not harm the person, but it will leave a black spot on the skin that will last for months.

And for those pesky street vehicle of drunkins, the MMDA should savvy bottles of brake fluid, to pour over the hood of the offending vehicle. Punch it on through the pains. Watch the driver cry over the P30,000 repainting bill he has to pay up with. Watch him swear that he won't counterflow again. Penny-effective, too!

While I fully understand the gravity of the problem and the need to curb it, Fernandez solution creates the fear that the reality of assault, which is a crime in any civilized society that guarantees rights is wrong with another wrong. In the end, Fernandez's scandal of any sort will just have a shocking impact and will create more problems with the weary state of our streets. Let's be civilized, considerate who just want to go home.

—EVA FRANCO-AL, Ayala Alabang Village, Muntinlupa

Democracy on the march

PRAISE be to God! The (mag) elections were a success. All those who love democracy and human rights should dance in the streets with the magis. All that remains to see is whether the elections were a real success. Now comes the real, hard work and challenge of building a strong, vibrant, democratic and free Iraq. But for now, let's celebrate!

There are two measures to determine the success of elections—violence and turnout. It is clear that the incidence of violence was much worse so far compared to the previous days, and miracle of miracles also takes into account the fact that the election day was the most important single day in Iraq for decades.

We will have to wait a few more days or weeks to know the real number of voters who cast their votes, especially in the Sunni areas. However, it is now clear that turnout of voters was solid. It was clearly overwhelming in some areas that they ran out of ballots.

And so we are left with a low level of violence and a strong voter turnout. This adds up to a solid success. Hooray! Let's dance!

I know there are some who are too blinded by their anti-American or anti-Bush feelings. They refuse to foster Iraq's success because it might inadvertently foster Bush or the United States. They are just blind opportunists. They should reclaim their priorities. Who cares who gets credit for the Iraqi elections? It is a cause for celebration and dancing in the streets. Democracy is on the march!

—BRUCE HALL, Baguio City
brucehall@pinoymail.com

The many shades of nationalism

IT seems to be that Filipinos have various interpretations of the meaning of nationalism.

For example, in the spirit of nationalism, our national language has been "enriched" with invented words. Ostensibly, a language develops through usage. In our country, we have decided to collect experts of the Filipino language in creating words to be instructed in schools. It seems one to think of the day when a discussion in elementary will bring out incorrect Filipino equivalents for electronics, sons, electrodes, etc. Because of a false sense of nationalism, there might come a time when students would be spending more time memorizing invented Filipino words.

We have inspired typhoons with Filipino names, such as "Ineng." If you were a Frenchman in France, you would certainly be in a fan as to where Ineng is coming from. Then, roaming the origin and direction of the typhoon has become a nightmare.

Also, in the name of nationalism, politicians take in changing the foreign-sounding names of streets and highways to Filipino-sounding names. Ascarraga to Claro M. Recto, Roxas Boulevard to Leon Guinto, Dewey Boulevard to Roxas Boulevard, Dakota to Aguinaldo, Mariano Ponce to Quezon, Harrison to Roxas Blvd., Taft to Gil Puyat, Pasay to Roxas Blvd., among others. And the politicians apparently engage in the pursuit of these changes as if they are an immense contribution to national progress.

They spend hundreds of hours and millions of pesos for these "accomplishments," while people are in dire need of decent water, our rivers are clogged and stinking, our public markets reek of foul odor, our traffic is a chaos, our streets and streets are ripe with pollution, our public schools cannot protect, our economy is going from bad to worse and our national debt sky-is-it-control.

Our politicians ignore these problems and instead focus on holding on to their pork barrel. Meanwhile, we hear of grotesque scenes of unbridled corruption as their [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Across the NATION

Illegal loggers mock gov't crackdown

MATI, Davao Oriental—Illegal loggers, who reportedly receive protection from ranking provincial and environment officials here, continue their activities despite the government's renewed crackdown on illegal cutting of trees.

On Wednesday, police seized two truckloads of illegally cut logs in Barangay Macambol.

David Pajarillaga, forest management specialist of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), said the seized logs include 259 pieces of premium Forest species such as almaciga.

Pajarillaga said the seized logs were about to be transported to Davao City when it was intercepted by the police.

He said the seized logs were worth at least P600,000.

Mati chief of police, Chief Insp. Jose Calimbahan, said the trucks used by the illegal loggers were owned by an Ishak de Celson and a Pedro Ordoñez.

Pajarillaga said they were still investigating who actually owned the illegally-cut logs.

Environment officials said illegal logging persists in the province "because loggers are heavily-armed."

"We in the DENR, especially our forest rangers, do not even have short firearms. We could not fight the illegal loggers," Romy Tarere, community environment officer, told the barangay.

Daniso Dimaisip Jun, Rizza Hasan Pedro Gil, which was identified by Sen. Miriam Santiago as one of the protectors protecting illegal logging, said soldiers tasked with protecting the forest should be blamed for illegal logging activities.

She said in Cateel town, there were reports that loggers could easily pass checkpoints by giving "grass or Friendster is found of laundry."

Lt. Col. Ignin Ajibatos, spokesperson of the military in Southeastern Mindanao, denied Bebsa Gil's accusation.

In Puerto Princesa, a community environment and natural resources officer (Cenro), who was sacked for misusing a permit from his department, faces the arms of the provincial council even if he was already relieved from his post.

The board members chose called on Senior Inspector Telesforo Cenro Bancod Cerbo to appear before them or the Quezon time of the Council but he failed to do so.

Cerbo was sacked from his post two weeks ago for allegedly using a private land mother permit (PCP) of another person to transport timber.

If PLTP is seized in an apartment who has a parcel of land where trees will be cut.

The trees could be used for private purposes provided these are cut from a private land. Reinaldo Zamora, PDI Mindanao Bureau and Adelfo Suerte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Church, solon join campaign vs 'jueteng'

LUCENA CITY—A Church leader and a lawmaker have joined hands in campaigning for a stop to the proliferation of illegal numbers games, especially "jueteng," in Albay and other parts of the region.

A news conference discussing the government ban on gambling was issued by Bishop Jose Sorra yesterday at his Ash Wednesday message.

Sorra said "one of the social scourges that have been afflicting and weakening the economic and moral fibers of our poverty-stricken people is the organized, widespread and notorious illegal and immoral game of numbers called jueteng."

Sorra cited the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' collective statement against gambling that "it is resulting to culture of gambling that is seriously eroding the moral values of the people."

Clandestine

"In an illegal form, especially jueteng, gambling has built a clandestine network of corruption that feeds itself on the hundreds of millions of pesos lost to gambling, especially by the poor."

Albay Rep. Carlos Imperial (NPC, 2nd Dist.) has urged Bicol police regional director Chief Supt. Teodoro Mosquera to implement the sustained police campaign against betting.

In his letter to Mosquera, Imperial said the declared national politics is to vocally stop the illegal numbers game "jueteng."

"Information has reached my office that illegal numbers game is prevalent in my district, 2nd District of Albay," Imperial said.

Imperial's district is composed of the City of Legazpi and the municipalities of Daraga, Manito and Bapo Bapa.

The lawmaker appealed to Mosquera to order the provincial director of Albay and the municipal chiefs of police to put an end to the operation of the illegal numbers game.

Evils

The bishop added that the Church and the diocese of Legazpi highly commend and vigorously support the lawmaker's "bold stroke of the pen to move notice to the police and the military authorities" that he personally and unequivocally condemns and denounces the evils of illegal gambling.

Sorra has challenged the two other congressmen of Albay to follow suit and other political leaders to exempt themselves on the campaign against jueteng like what Imperial did.

He ordered his priests to read his pastoral statement in all churches and village chapels yesterday and this Sunday.

He appealed to the public, especially media, to renew the collective commitment to combat the growing culture of gambling.

Amid the roll-off bets and tampered, jueteng continues to operate in Albay and other provinces of Bicol.

In Camarines Norte, jueteng operations started some five days ago and drawn are being made in Sta. Elena. Talisay has fixed gambling many spotters and is Labo town for "huge-big-spending events, according to Jun Zabala of Ang Bikol Ngayon, a local weekly tabloid.

Joel Boleza, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

5.2 quake sends monkeys fleeing

SUBIC PRESORT ZONE: A 5.2 magnitude earthquake in central areas in Luzon at 6:30 a.m. on Thursday disturbed monkeys in the forests of Subic where the former area hit at intensity 2.

Delegates to the 6th Luzon-wide Higher Education Press Conference, all holed up in Subic's Forest Hills, one of the highest peaks in that coastal city, reported seeing many monkeys descend at the earth's shook.

Some students rushed out of their villas, according to Dr. Pacifico Siapoco.

Andy Cabello, a teacher from Baguio City's Montessori International College, said he was asked from sleep.

Bonnie Bobilian, chief of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, said the quake was not strong enough to generate tsunami or tidal waves.

It was recorded 50 km northeast of Masinloc, Zambales Municipal Mayor, Bobilian said.

The quake, running 91 km deep, was caused by the movement of the Manila Trench, he added. Benito Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Anti-smuggling team says ₱50M in goods seized

A TOTAL of 700 million worth of smuggled goods have been seized by the Task Force Subic in a period of two months since President Macapagal-Arroyo created the task force and declared an all-out war against smuggling in the country.

In an accomplishment report to SBMA Chair Feliciano Salvacion and Administrator Alfredo Antonio, Task Force Director Jose Calimlim, a retired general, reported at least 10 cases of apprehension involving smuggling of luxury vehicles, electronic spare parts, appliances, household items, jewelry and various second-hand vehicles.

In a statement, Calimlim said his task force brought a renewed drive to fight the misbegotten smuggling inside the freeport and since then, the group remained vigilant and steadfast.

The limited period had accustomed a lot to commute more and had not succumbed to pressures from various groups to go slow, "I am here to embrace and implement the order of our President for the sake of our governments end-country," he said in his statement.

The task force, a composite team with members from the Armed Forces, the Intelligence Services, the Bureau of Customs, Philippine National Police and the Department of Justice, is the anti-smuggling operations arm of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

Calimlim also credited the Bureau of Customs Port of Subic which is headed by Darwin Cedeo for Atty. Marlotte Antonimus, for vigilance and support to the anti-smuggling campaign.

Protests mount vs sex offender's return

BAGUIO CITY—Education Secretary Florencio Abad is facing continued flak all quarters of Benguet's education sector for reinstating the scorer to the country's first sexual harassment case.

Magdalena Gapsi, one of the teachers who accused Allyson Bengson, Bagiuo City school's superintendent, of sexual misconduct in 1994, is leading a Reinstate's Day protest against Abad. Bengson's conviction was affirmed by the Supreme Court on Oct. 18, 2004.

The High Court favored the decision of the then Department of Education Culture and Sports special investigating panel that found Bengson guilty but it modified his penalty from outright dismissal to a year's suspension in recognition of his service record.

Bengson's 60th birthday falls on Feb. 14, making him eligible for retirement.

Gapsi is also filing contempt charges against Abad at the Supreme Court, for acting to resolve Bengson's fate in grievance despite her petition for the tribunal to dismiss Bengson in stead.

Bengson is also facing a third sexual harassment case due to pending before the Civil Service Commission.

Abad wrote to local newspapers last week that he had simply followed the court's Oct. 19, 2004 ruling when he reinstated Bengson.

"The Department of Education ordered [Bengson's] reinstatement . . . strictly in compliance with the ruling . . . which corrected Mr. Bengson of sexual harassment against Gapsil, but [which also] lightened his penalty from dismissal [the previous decision of the Supreme Court] to a one-year suspension without pay," Abad wrote.

The secretary argued that his decision was "at no time aimed to countenance (but the Gapsil ruling) sexual misappropriate behavior among its ranks."

Abad promised to withdraw his order only upon the instructions of the High Court, "the final arbiter on this matter."

Alexander Bangoy, Gapsi's lawyer, said the ruling's "dispositive portion (penalty clause)" did not refer to Bengson's reinstatement.

He said Abad could have simply withdrawn Bengson from his post instead of resorting to a "double-spin."

"By doing so, he could salvage whatever is left of the dwindling respect for [his]fellow moral institution," Bangoy said in a press statement.

Bangoy, who is also a member of the Initiative Gabriela Legal Support Group, said outraged teachers and parents would not allow Bengson and his "pathological tactics" to bow out gracefully. Yvonne Cabrera, *PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation and Communications
TOLL REGULATORY BOARD

NORTH LUZON EXPRESSWAY
Approved Initial Authorized Toll Rates

Notice is hereby given that the Toll Regulatory Board ("TRB") has approved the following Initial Authorized Toll Rates for the Closed System and Open System applicable to Phase 1 of the North Luzon Tollway Project starting at 12:00 A.M., February 8, 2005, Tuesday:

Vehicle Class	Closed system (Peso per km)	Open system (Peso per entry)
Class 1	2.143636	41.500000
Class 2	4.259596	106.017456
Class 3	7.453919	127.229999

This notice is being made pursuant to TRB Board Resolution No. 2005-04 dated 27 January 2005 which requires publication of the Initial Authorized Toll Rates once in a newspaper of general circulation in accordance with law.

Any interested expressway user shall have the right to file within a period of ninety (90) days from the date of publication of this notice, a petition with the TRB at the 2nd Floor, Integrated Star of the Philippines Building, Julia Vargas Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City for a review of the initial toll rates.

SO ORDERED.

By Authority of the Board:

(SGD) MANUEL G. IMPERIAL
Executive Director
Toll Regulatory Board

Approved Toll Fees of the New NLE Effective February 08, 2005

Tanauan murder survivor vows to pursue raps

TANAUAN CITY—Two days after hosting the hospital where he was treated for 42 days for multiple gunshot wounds, the mayor survivor who witnessed how his two friends were gunned down by the city mayor's bodyguard is now ready to file charges, testify and get justice for him and his two friends.

Alexander Mendoza, 39, and his fellow workers Reinaldo Mallpol and Arman Sandoval, were gunned down by Rene Ordog, standing bodyguard of Mayor Alberto Corona, on about 12 p.m., Dec. 29 last year at the Mendoza Hall in front of the St. John Evangelist Church in Barangay Sambat city.

Distinguishing facial at the chest wounds using an Ithaca shotgun pistol, killing Mallpol and Sandoval instantly. Mendoza suffered five gunshot wounds.

He was taken at the Batangas Regional Hospital and transferred to a hospital in Tanauan where he stayed for over a month.

"My resolve to get justice for me and my two friends . . . never waned even if I was in the hospital for more than a month," Mendoza, the lone survivor, said.

"But what really pains me and my family was the unfair television report that said I refused to testify and that I was paid to be silent."

Mendoza and the two other victims were all from Barangay Ambulong in this city and used to be drinking buddies.

"That's the reason I can't just go silent on the case, because the two were my friends," Mendoza said. "How can I feel it] when I was in the hospital with a number of gunshot wounds?"

According to Mendoza, he was with Mallpol and Sandoval on Dec. 27 at the Mendoza Hall where the mayor was attending a reunion party when Dalupinde ding, the mayor's bodyguard, went berserk.

They were there as an advisory group of a surveying company to prepare for a wedding the next day.

Mendoza said Mallpol just asked Dalupinde if he could use the toilet of the Mendoza Hall, but the mayor's bodyguard refused.

"The last thing I remember was Dalupinde shooting 'Mulong ako ng dito sa akin sa Tanauan. Dahilan ako bully ako sa Tanauan,' then he took out his shotgun and fired at me. I remember being hit by many bullets and fell into the back of the trash bin," Mendoza recalled.

He was discharged on Feb. 6 and now walks with crutches.

Mallpol's widow, Rina Mariano, 35, a factory worker in Metro Manila, was left with six children, the eldest of them is 8 years old, and the youngest, a nine-month-old baby.

"I want justice for my husband. What did he do to deserve such a brutal death? He just asked Dalupinde why he could use the disabled toilet . . .," Rina Mariano said.

Sandoval's widow, Elsie, 28, a fish vendor, was left with two kids, ages six and four. But Elsie said she had already been remarried.

"The chief of police of Tanauan has already notified me for talking to the media," Elsie said. Mel Magsino-Lubis, PIA Southern Luzon/Batangas

HUNCHING AGAINST DRUGS ROY ANTHONY ALCOY/Philippine Star

A road roller crushes pieces of equipment believed to be used in manufacturing shabu that were seized during a raid on a suspected drug laboratory in Davao City at the start of the year.

Leyte doctors hold 'sit down' strike

By Jani Arnaiz
PhilStar.com

MAASIN CITY—The provincial government on Tuesday was besieged by complaints after doctors at the Integrated Provincial Health Office (IPHO) went on a "sit down" strike to protest the suspension of an agreement that allowed them to continue their private practice.

Although they were present, the doctors did not attend to the patients who went to the IPHO's out patient department in retaliation to the move of the provincial board.

Dr. Blanding doctors at the IPHO received a copy of Resolution No. 030-2005 "suspending the implementation of the memorandum of agreement allowing private practice of government doctors ..."

Dr. Imelda Rodriguez, IPHO chief of clinics, said the doctors staged the strike on Tuesday as "validation for suspending the implementation of the MOA without due process."

She said the provincial board members should have notified the doctors first so gave them a chance to air their side when they deliberated on the issue.

"They did a drastic move [and] are could also make one," Rodriguez told the doctors.

She, however, clarified that they still took care of patients confined at the hospital and attended to patients on follow-up check-ups.

The provincial board approved on Jan. 12 the MOA, which was drafted by the doctors, but only to suspend its implementation on Jan. 18. The copy of the resolution was received by the doctors on Monday.

In the MOA, the IPHO doctors were allowed to continue their private practice so as incentive for the low salary they get from the provincial government. These doctors receive a monthly salary of between P17,000 and P20,000.

But the private practice of these doctors should be done when they are off duty at the IPHO. The Department of Health allows such a practice.

During a dialogue with the doctors on Wednesday, board member Ilsa Tomol explained that the suspension of the MOA followed complaints by some patients that they were made to pay even if the consultation was done in the government hospital.

NIA chief asks if case on irrigation scam filed

By Chino B. Fuentes
AM Heyes Bureau

TAGBILARAN CITY—The new administrator of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) has asked the Office of the Ombudsman in the Visayas (OMB-Visayas) if the complaint on alleged irregularities in the P120-million small reservoir irrigation project (SRIP) in Talibon, Bohol was docketed filed with the anti-graft office.

The query was made by new NIA administrator Ivanoe Domingo in a letter sent to Deputy Ombudsman for Visayas Pedro Mercado Jan. 28.

Domingo gave a copy of his letter to regional Juvenile Antipanillo of the Ombudsman Against Corruption, Oppression and Social Inconsistent (Ibocon).

Last year, Antipanillo and Ibocon filed a complaint on the alleged irregularities in the construction of the Talibon Dam under provincial Irrigation Engineer Cecilia Bridge.

Domingo informed Mere that former NIA Administrator Jesus Emmanuel Paras directed the conduct of a fact finding investigation last November.

He said the investigation report was forwarded to the NIA Committee on Discipline "for appropriate action."

"In the course of our evaluation, however, we discovered that there is a pending case before your office against Mr. Serge and filed by Mr. Antipanillo which unfortunately deals on the issue of the consideration of the Talibon Dam," Domingo said.

The NIA administrator requested Mercado provide information on the "status when thereon."

"Please be informed that said information is vital in the determination of whether or not forum shopping exists ..." Domingo added.

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PHILIPS

Battalion commander killed in Sulu

From page A1

lieutenant, the battalion commander, and PO1 Gil Bautista—later cited at the Jolo Provincial Hospital, according to Abdul Farah, the attending physician.

Brig. Gen. Gabriel Habacon, chief of the Army's 1st Infantry Division, said the military had recovered its "offensive position" and soldiers were now entering the MILF camp on Monday.

Troops have been battling about 800 fighters from the al-Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf group and renegade members of the MILF since the military launched a convoy of soldiers in the ill-fated town on Monday.

Military strikes

Army howitzers started shelling rebel positions in dense forests early Monday. By midmorning, the troops had overrun the MILF camp and forced the guerrillas to flee.

The MILF, formerly headed by Hashim, signed a peace deal with the government in 1996, but some disgruntled members joined the Abu Sayyaf and were involved in several kidnappings in 2000.

Surrounded

Authorities said they have surrounded the main wandering force of at least 200 Moro guerrillas in Patikul.

A rebel camp in the town was overrun early yesterday, said Southcom chief Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza.

Several thousand people have fled their homes since the fighting erupted early Monday, the Quezon City-based Citizens' Disaster Response Center (CDRC) said.

Several thousand people have fled their homes since the fighting erupted early Monday, the Quezon City-based Citizens' Disaster Response Center (CDRC) said.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) said they were redirecting funds for the island.

PASSENGERS are shocked out as a roadblock in Jolo as the fighting between Muslim rebels and government troops continues on its fourth day Thursday. Hundreds of troops have been rushed to Jolo. AP

"We suspended travel for the meantime. It is a situation to appraise but there is no problem of emptiness," said Noel Rota, program manager of Growth with Equity's Livelihood Enhancement and Peace Program (LEPP) in Zamboanga City.

LEPP is financed by USAID and implemented to promote dialogue with the Mindanao Economic Development Council.

'Surrender or nothing'

Responses around to crush the rebels soldiers they surrendered.

"It's either surrender or nothing. They should lay down their arms and surrender to me these who killed my soldiers there," he said.

Abdusakaran Jumaali, a resident MNLF member said he met interim secretary of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, was sent by Senate Speaker Jose de Venecia to talk to the rebels about stopping the fighting.

"I asked them why they launched the offensive. They told me they were tired of the non-review of MNLF members in Jolo and the measures by soldiers of a Muslim family in Barangay Bantilan in Malabang," Jumaali said.

Jumaali said Misuari would only agree to a ceasefire if the military withdraws.

Misuari Bantilan, a Moro rebel leader formerly allied with the gunmen, said the situation was "a complete mess."

"Misuari is not in control. He would not back down from a fight to protect their stronghold.

Asked in a radio interview if the attackers would likely survive, Jet, he replied, "That's not in the language of a Muslim warrior," Imam Capt. Sakaran Abdula, all-MM police chief, said a police official was declared missing after Wednesday's clash in Barangay Bantilan in Indanan town.

Braganza, also flew to Zamboanga to talk to many President Macapagal-Arroyo, had ordered the deployment of another Marine battalion to Sulu.

'Free firing zones'

Dessa also said the military and local leaders in Indanan, Patikul, Panamao, Hoang and Luuk had agreed to establish "free firing zones" to protect residents from civilians since they're told to leave their areas.

Troops have been put on alert and security has been tightened in several cities, including Zamboanga, to prevent drive-by shootings, according to Rosario.

If they can, government forces want to capture or finish off the attackers now, he said.

Vicious cycle

"This is a vicious cycle. They would take a unit and then create trouble again," Durand told ABS-CBN television. "I think it's an opportunity for us [since] they're ready to finish this."

Misuari formerly headed the MNLF, a large Moro separatist group that accepted limited autonomy and signed a peace accord with the government in 1996.

But splinters of the group were later and Misuari was imprisoned here Manila on charges of rebellion. Many of his armed followers still maintain strongholds in Jolo, and have been accused of supporting the al-Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf. Report's Peter Jaella's dispatch, Ed Cesario, Florencio Gotinga and Jonella Bonilla, PDN Mindanao Bureau, Ainaida Papa in Manila, and Inquirer wires

GMA assures Islamic states fighting in Sulu isolated

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday assured the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) that the armed hostilities in Sulu were isolated and that military operations to retrieve Camp in the predominantly Muslim province were directed at "terrorists and criminals."

"The situation in Sulu has brought together the forces of law against the forces of lawlessness. As we fight), pockets of criminals and terrorist holdouts, we are limiting the theater of the law from which the full cooperation of the local government," Ms. Arroyo told in a speech at the 27th national assembly of the League of Shia Governors of the Philippines in Zamboanga.

"... We will not let the peace be the people but we will not give the terrorists a moment of peace."

Some 1,000 people were forced to flee their homes in Jolo after clashes broke out between the military and more than 40 to adopt breakaway faction of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), whose leader Nur Misuari had forged a peace agreement with the government.

Ms Arroyo said the military operations in Sulu were not directed at the MILF which, she pointed out, had been silent and was broken in various local government peace talks.

"What are we doing? We are fighting against terrorists and criminals in Sumisip and Indanan in Sulu. These

lines we are ensuring that MILF camps remain and viable. Are we kept out of harm's way even as we wage war against criminals and terrorists," she said.

She said the evacuees were being cared for and he said it was safe for them to return to their homes.

Ms Arroyo said the ceasefire with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was "holding right for until today and we will most unequivocally commit to preserve the ceasefire as we pursue the resumption of peace talks."

Government negotiators, led by Secretary Rowaida Qaamia Dedia, said they had told diplomats from the OIC member-states that fighting in Sulu by the peace process with the MILF that the fighting in Sulu would not set back upcoming talks with the Moro rebel group.

"My gave a little [update] on what is [fighting] with some ... and the efforts that are being taken to contain the situation," Dedia, presidential adviser on the peace process, told reporters after emerging from briefing of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Mr Arroyo said the military operations in Sulu were not directed at the MILF which, she pointed out, had been silent and was broken in various local government peace talks.

"What are we doing? We are fighting against terrorists and criminals in Sumisip and Indanan in Sulu. These

lines we are ensuring that MILF camps remain and viable. Are we kept out of harm's way even as we wage war against criminals and terrorists," she said.

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The MILF, which broke away from the MNLF after the latter signed a peace agreement with the government in 1996 and took up the fight for an independent Islamic state, has often managed to keep its ranks from the factions.

Aallet Laing Jocelloma and TJ Burgonio

Marcos victims fear they may never get share of $683-M loot

By Norman Bordadora

SECRET of the Marcos regime yesterday expressed fears that they might not get a share of the $683-million in recovered Sharon deposits because of the delay in the break placed in the general fund of the national government.

Torture victim Mario Ollo to Inquirer, one of the more 9,000 victims of human rights violations who filed suit won the class suit against deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos in Hawaii, questioned the propriety of the government spending the recovered assets.

"By what authority did they spend the money? It was transferred to the national treasury only in March 2004 and could not have been included in the budget for last year," Bordado told the Inquirer.

"If it was not included in the budget hearings, the issue that they should explain to the various

From page A1

Militants assail 'secret' releases of Marcos ...

said they were doomed by his. Jalee Arroyo's statement that withdrawing had already spent part of the recovered Marcos illgotten wealth.

Arroyo said a report submitted by incoming Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima showed a balance of only $467.67 million (P26.19 billion) as of Dec. 31, 2004 of the original amount which had been $683 million in 2003.

"President's report confirmed that Mr Arroyo had already taken the money to spend the Marcos loot," said Marcoleta.

Bayan Muna party-list Representative Satur Ocampo said the confusion about the Marcos loot was due to the lack of knowledge of some Malacañang officials.

"They were busy saying that the money is insane when part of the money has been spent. I think we need an administrative spokesperson who is the President. She should make an accounting of the money so that the people will know once and for all," Ocampo said.

In Senate and House hearings yesterday, President Macapagal-Arroyo's decided the Marcos funds dispute, convened by the government and other public funds were allegedly misused during the presidential election of 2004.

"All public money is spent according to the law," Ms Arroyo said in a press conference in Koronadal, when asked about reports that she had used part of the $683 million in recovered Marcos loot for her presidential campaign.

It was the first time the President did not spoken about the charges against her husband.

Ms Arroyo said the Department of Budget and Management and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) would be able to explain where the money went.

"Now let me take the opportunity to talk about [some of] [which is right] [violations during the Marcos regime]. My my wonderful to note the human rights crime. We need a law; I have never certified that bill in support," Ms Arroyo said.

She was referring to a bill seeking to use part of the $683-million in Marcos Swiss deposits forfeited in favor of the government to the victims of human rights violations during martial law.

Though she has set aside $200 million of the Marcos loot, the money cannot be released by the claimants until the entering law is passed by the Congress because Agrarian Reform Law provides that all Marcos ill-gotten wealth recovered by the government should go to agrarian reform.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President did not direct the Marcos funds.

"The opposition is clowning in the dark on this one. The use of funds is governed by law and nothing has been diverted by malacañang," Bunye said in a statement.

Malicious

Bunye said the President was committed to working with Congress in amending the law that would empower the victims of the Marcos regime.

"The funds by this are intact and is to say that the fund has been depleted," he pointed out to media. "Malicious," Bunye said.

In the House of Representatives, Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales revealed that about P22 billion of the $683 million (P38 billion) in Marcos money recovered from Switzerland had been spent on dubious transactions.

Of the P22 billion, P2.7 billion is said to have been used by the Land Bank of the Philippines in 2003, and P2.2 billion in the Department of Agrarian Reform and other agencies involved in agrarian reform, said Rosales, chair of the House committee on human rights.

A total of P20 billion was supposed to go to agrarian reform and P20 billion to victims of the Marcos regime as promised by the President.

Violation

Rosales said this was a clear violation of a Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) resolution directing that 70 percent of the Marcos fund be used for land acquisition and 30 percent for high-impact intervention.

Rosales said most officials directly responsible for the budgeting may be contending at DAR were no longer around to answer questions on how the department had spent the Marcos loot.

Ricardo Reyes, executive director of the Philippine for Agrarian Reform Communities Development Services, a coalition monitor of farmers, told the Senate that he had informed the Senate committee in October last year about the dubious transaction at DAR involving the recovered Marcos funds.

He said he found that P544 million of the Illiana money had been used to fund the hybrid rice program called Glutenang Masaganang Ani (GMA), while P188 million was used for the Gobong Quezon Province Integrated Coconut Processing Plant (CQPIEPP), which is owned by a private firm.

A total of P541 million was used for irrigation projects that were allegedly ghost projects, said Reyes. Authority has awarded before the presidential election in 2004, according to Reyes.

He said the hybrid rice program had some audit findings as it was entered with ghost deliveries.

Private firms

Reyes said former Agusan del Sur Rep. Socorro Ecleo Rabaya, Reyes, Rabaya, Rabaya, Rabaya

GMA goes a-courting, ups Valentine's gift to ₱3,000

From page A1

...three times the amount announced by her spokesperson earlier this week.

Mr Arroyo signed on Wednesday Executive Order No. 115 providing for the ₱3,000 (worth $55) one-time cash gift to government employees for the first time in 2005.

The Confederation for the Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (Courage) spoke out and hailed the Valentine cash gift as "heartless."

Courage had requested the Arroyo administration to give each of the 1.6 million government workers a ₱5,000 cash gift, or the same amount they had received in December.

But Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye had mentioned that the Valentine bonus would be "anywhere from ₱3,000 to ₱5,000."

The President said the cash gift was for the government workers' "considerable efforts to maintain the limited financial resources and provide quality services despite the austerity measures."

According to Bunye, the amount of the bonus was based on the contingency ...ing from last year's austerity measures, such as the ...utback on fuel and power consumption, foreign travels and seminars, which we ...ve managed to reach at least ₱13 billion.

PRESIDENT ARROYO hands ... a water project for the Kuala ...rdera Barangay Barayan, Malangas, Zamboanga peninsula. ...

Given to all

The ₱3,000 bonus will be given to all government employees, whether permanent or casual, temporary or contractual, with at least four months of service.

The President's EO ...ed that the bonus would come from the available cash savings of each department and the unreleased appropriations in the 2005 budget.

Personnel of military and ...ilitary agencies, the bonus would come from their respective available savings.

Government-owned and ...controlled corporations and government financial institutions would charge the bonuses against their corporate funds.

Across the board

But Courage still not satisfied with a one-time gift of ₱5,000.

It want to across-the-board increase of ₱3,000 per month, on grounds that government salaries have remained unchanged since 2001, when a monthly increase of ₱2,000 was given.

Rationalizing, however, that yet to budge from its position that the government cannot afford a salary increase because of budgetary woes.

Instead of a wage hike, the President yesterday announced her plan to extend "enrollment assistance" to government employees whose kids are school year starts in June.

She ordered the Department of Budget and Management to clarify how the new cash gift could be ...ssued.

2nd witness to murder ...

From page A1

Amoro, the other witness in the Dumalahin killing, was shot dead on the gates of the Zamboanga del Sur National High School, where he was a student. He barely four severe bullet wounds.

"It was the second attempt on my life," said Amoro, considered a vital witness in the Dumalahin slay case because of his personal acquaintance with the main suspect, former police officer Sac-Ibrahim Whipde.

He recounted that two men tried to kill him inside the bus terminal in Molave town last year. As it happened, the would-be assassin's gun jammed and he found an opportunity to run.

By Jed Dawa in Cebu and Jhon Bisnar

Attempted abduction

Despite said that a few months after Dumalahin's murder on May 11, 2002, two motorcycle-riding men attempted to kidnap his wife in Ipil, Zamboanga del Sur.

He also said that before the attempts on his life, a relative of Whipde's offered his family ₱50,000 in exchange for his recantation of his testimony against the ex-police officer.

Dumalahin's killing was one of the many unsolved cases recently studied by the International Federation of Journalists in cooperation with the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines.

The federation noted that government inaction and a "culture of violence" were behind the increasing incidence of journalist killings in the country.

Change of venue

Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. yesterday endorsed a petition lodged by Dumalahin's widow, Gemma, for the transfer of the venue of Whipde's trial, according to Sheila Coronel, executive director of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism and prime mover of the Fourth on Fund for Filipino Journalists.

Coronel said the high court's decision on the change of venue was expected to be announced on Feb. 15.

Whipde's murder trial has been suspended since October last year, when Gemma Dumalahin filed the appeal, seeking the transfer of the trial venue from Pagadian to Manila or Cebu City.

She cited the danger to her and the witnesses' lives as the basis for her petition. Also ...ort P. dela Cruz, PDI Mindanao Bureau

HARD Pauze (second) throws in a commander [over Roy's advice during the Kenny Monday Weekend Pro-Am yesterday]

Japanese pair grabs lead at halfway mark

By Hosang R. Castillo

SUBIC, Zambales—Japanese Yoshinaga Tomokazu and Takao Yasuda assembled a second straight two-over 74 yesterday to take a one-stroke lead over the Shoji Parza-Jose Ruy team halfway through the Series 86-outfit Pro-Am.

A seven-year pro from Kanazawa, Yoshinaga said he and amateur partner Yasuda gunned down their birdies against the same number of bogeys and a double bogey over the demanding Lanigay layout of The Subic Inn for a 148 total.

"We played good again in a tough course," said the 27-year-old Yoshinaga of his first English.

Parza-Ruy had a chance to share the lead for the second consecutive round only to three-putt the 18th for a 75 and 147 run up outfitted Jong champions Gerard Custodio and Al Tiongson, who managed a 77.

Retired lawyer and amateur partner Jose Ruy teamed in a 76 and occupied fourth spot with a 150 aggregate, one ahead of the Nick Rempillo-Ely Chiong-Jess Ty-Ian Roger Bernardo—Elvira Nadal on 152 standings.

The winds again blew hard over the par-71, 7,087-yard layout with some entering the 120 mark spelling havoc among players.

After an 80 on Tuesday, Bernardo Sengale and Jung Hyung ye signed for a 72 and jumped to solo seventh spot at 152—even as seven teams tied for eighth, the Jokuson Sengale—Sabando Mendoza foursome among them.

Gaito-Mendoza rebounded a 73 in the first round but ballooned to an 80 after two double bogeys, an bogey and a triple bogey in a 40-45 round.

Tied with Gaito and Mendoza were Kevin Smith and Enrico Asuncion with 74 and 77, Randi Bernardo Trevino 75-76, Ben Bagunu-Bobby Bilgo 77-74 and Raul Buenaventura-Marvin Dumandan 75-78 in the event having Ramon Mendoza Ramirez, Technologies Corp. of Japan as title sponsor.

Club Inn Dennis Lacuna, as guest speaker with Tiko Riviera president Jimmy Pizarro, posted a second straight 77 for 154, good for a share of 10th spot with the father and son team of Jacinto and Jerry Bagunu, who rebounded well a 75 after a 79 Tuesday.

Samsung tilt grand finals begins today

TWO national amateur champions will take the challenge of a talented cast of qualifiers as they determine who's the best of the best in the grand finale of the Samsung Amateur Tour at the windswept Mt. Mohanesa Golf and Country Club in Lipa, Batangas, on Feb. 12-16.

That pool's finale promises to be the most exciting as amateur Jayvie Agojo, who pulled off an exciting win in last month's Philippine Ladies Open at Manila Golf, and Jun Bravo, the reigning Philippine men's amateur champion, are both in the title field.

In the men's division, Bravo is set for a tough outing against former nationals foster Sumayao and Ely Bravo as well as Raymund Bingil and Kenny are Jun Chung Hee with Baguioan a JAMES cum) because of a prior commitment.

The draw notes will also put the pressure on Agojo. She battles the likes of former national players Aileen Paz, Hillel Villavicencio and Lizi de Dalmau in the ladies Class A of the tourney which also has Philippines nations as the official webs. Silvia Bahia, Claire Rhea Gotesola, while Taybuhaan, RJS by Gerardo Ordonation, Pink Dino Bermejo, Coppertone Sport, and Regals E as its other sponsors. Killer Bee, Jun 98.5, Nice 89.1, Magic 89.9, 99.9 RT and 103.5 El are net media partners.

"This tilt will prove to riders all the best the country's pool of talents has to offer," said Ben Bhar in charge of the organizing Professional Sports Management Group.

Mt. Makiamot, site of the coming Philippine Open, remains one of the most challenging local courses, which require consistency throughout. Hideaways, long, fairways, tough greens, and plenty of hazards will require players to put sand wedge Lisa Inoba nothem bag in good use.

THE LINEUP:

Men's Class A: Al Gallardo, Manfred Arcadio, Ben Lund, Andrei Gonzalez, Phong Zamora, Alonso Cruz, Raymund Garcia

Men's Class B: Rene Abes, Gabriel Manuel, Alberto Gan, Ben Yap, Fred Sison, Glen Gopio, Ben G.

Men's Class C: Willie Lim, Allen Bilgo, Mel Arcadio, Ben Chua, Al Gil, Randy Nakahodate, Nestor Bautista

Men's Class D: Lauro Ros Jun, Ismael Ignacio, Jimmy Yuag, Ely Chiongson, Jose Ong, Peter Ty, Frank Bilgo

Ladies Class A: Eden Sherman, Jasper Ice, Gigi Pedigan, Aileen Arcadio, Jocelyn Gorman, Mabel Lalicon, Agojo

Ladies Class B: Pauline Ante, Cora Rodriguez, Joanne Tolentino, Irene Chua, Ilen Rivera, Gloria Mendoza, Sandra Dado

Ladies Class C: Tita Zamora, Teresita Arcadio, Jane Alcaraz, Rowena Garcia, Mylene Arcadio, Sara Yap

METRO
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EZ2 27 11
SUPERLOTTO 6/49 18 19 28 38 40 44 ₱8,000,000.00
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So sue us, dismissed cops dare PNP

POSITIVES BUT NOT WANTING
Wooden toys known locally as 'tumanjo' lack the sophistication of popular electronic gadgets and toys, but these boys from a middle class community in Manila seem to find them no less enticing

By Leila B. Salaverria

MANILA, policeman Supt. Marcelino Pedroso yesterday dared top police officials to file charges against him and other policemen linked to dismissed National Bureau of Investigation agent Marcelo Acosta, if the accusations really want them to make an appearance at Camp Crame.

Initially, 11 Manila policemen, with alleged links to business, were ordered to step down from their posts.

Yesterday, seven more Manila policemen were added to the list.

Sources had been accused of engaging in kidnapping and extortion activities.

Pedroso, the highest ranking lawman linked to Acosta so far, said that he and the other policemen relieved from their posts would only turn up at the proper investigative forum.

"If they have evidence against us, they should have no trouble filing charges. If they do, we will face the charges in the proper forum. It's nonsense that they are on a fishing expedition," Pedroso told the reporters.

He also said that they did not want to go to Camp Crame for fear of being ambushed on the way or detained once they get there.

Pedroso's counterpart-superior, Western Police District director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong, yesterday gave Pedroso and the other relieved Manila policemen 24 hours to appear in his office. "I have issued a directive telling them to report in 24 hours, or I will place them on AWOL status and order their arrest," Bulaong said.

The 11 other policemen ordered earlier were Insp. Cesar Ali, PO3 Rodolfo Rodriguez, PO2 Peter Reyes, PO2 Alexander delos Reyes, PO2 Benito Marquez, PO2 Fernando Castellano, PO2 Ismil de Guzman, SPO2 Elmer Mendoza, PO2 Ronald Ramos and PO2 Antonio Trocino. Added to the list yesterday were PO3 Jerry Campo, PO2 Ferdinand Lapac, PO2 Benedict Cruz II, PO2 Nipolito Pineda, PO2 Hilbey Sanata, PO2 Angelito Espiritu and PO2 Edwin Lacson.

In a letter sent earlier to PNP chief Director General Edgar Aglipay, Pedroso said that he and his companions did not want to be presented in a police lineup as this would compromise trial by publicity.

But the tough-talking Aglipay was singing a different tune in a press conference yesterday after Pedroso and company failed to show up.

"It is the policy of the PNP that people to be presented before the media must first be be subjected to an inquest or a warrant," he told reporters. The "new" policy caught reporters by surprise, considering that police had long been accustomed to parading before the media arrested suspects even without charges filed against them.

In just a few instances, policemen allowed victims and relatives to hit handcuffed suspects in full view of reporters and cameramen. Aglipay yesterday claimed he had stopped this practice after the arrested office on Aug. 31, "except for unavoidable circumstances when media persons were already present and we couldn't do anything but present the suspects."

Meanwhile, police asset Mary "Rowena" Ong surrendered Thursday to answer complaints against Acosta's almost seven years after she and her mother were allegedly abducted. Ong said she only filed the complaint in the NBI Manila office as new witnesses Acosta had already been arrested after a complainant, Caroline Galbo, surfaced with a claim that she had been kidnapped by the former agent. With Christine F. Bigcas

DOJ asks NBI help in Vidamos slay probe

By Philip C. Tubeza

JUSTICE Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday ordered the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to help identify and hunt down the killers of Leo Pilas Public Information Officer chief Teresita Vidamos who was ambushed by four unidentified men on Monday.

Gonzalez said he ordered the NBI to join the police in investigating the murder and to report back to him their findings.

"I want this case solved as soon as possible. He was a member of the DOJ family," Gonzalez said.

Vidamos was killed as she was about to leave her house at 163 13-B, Cuadrito Avenue, Phase 1 Cambridge Village, Pulang Lupa, Las Pilas.

"Whenever the police does, I want the NBI to be there during the investigation," Gonzalez said.

He said that investigators had an inside yet lost move trying to look for witnesses who might be able to give a description of Vidamos's killers.

His four suspects allegedly approached Vidamos as she was about to leave her 1,000-sqm. lot of the turn had positioned themselves at the rear of the vehicle and served as backup, while the two killers walked up to Vidamos and shot her several times in the head.

The suspects then fled on foot and headed toward Naga Road. Vidamos was rushed to the nearby Lanuz Medical Clinic, but she was declared dead on arrival.

Sen. Manny Villar, chair of the Senate Committee on Public Order, yesterday urged the Philippine National Police to hasten the investigation of the case, and added that he would personally monitor the case.

Dacer-Corbito case to be heard, finally

By Tarra Y. Quismundo

FINALLY, attention.

For years, the double murder case of publicist Salvador "Bubby" Dacer and his driver Emmanuel Corbito remained idle in court.

Fortunately, Judge Myra Fernandez of the Manila Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 18 assumed the five-volume case file during an inventory and promptly scheduled the arraignment of suspects on Feb. 21.

Fourth judge

The judge, who assumed her post late last year, will be the fourth judge to hear the case since it was filed in 2000.

A court employee said colonels for the hearing had been sent to state prosecutors and defense lawyers, while the National Bureau of Investigation and the National Police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group were ordered to bring to court the accused in their custody.

There are 17 accused, among them 11 policemen, in the double murder case.

Plea entry

The arraignment would require them to enter either their respective pleas—guilty or not guilty—to the charges of killing Dacer and Corbito on Nov. 14, 2000.

Twenty-two men had initially been indicted in court for kidnapping and double murder, but the Court of Appeals allowed three of them —brothers James and William Lupon, and Alvin Dilloy—to raise state witness, upon the motion of state prosecutors.

Osang shows up, posts bail

AFTER disappearing for almost two weeks, actress Susanna Bacos showed up before Judge Rolando Rosario of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 62 yesterday only to post bail and obtain arrest.

The judge on Feb. 1 issued a warrant for her for failure to attend hearings on the libel suit filed against her by convicted suspect Felix Bolo.

Lawyer Marjorie de Castro of Bruno Ruiz and Bacos representing her lawyer Dave Fredericks Escalona at about 8:30 a.m. and posted a ₱20,000 bail.

Bacos, who was turned in by a tipped traffic aide's, jeans and black sandals kept silent while the judge talked to her.

Irene C. Pena

Court twits Makati on Fort

By Philip C. Tubeza

DAGIG City has won a major legal battle in its boundary dispute with Makati over five barangays.

In a 20-page decision on Jan. 31, the appellate court's Special 14th Division affirmed Pasig court ruling which junked Makati's motion to have a preliminary injunction, which prevented a from taking jurisdiction over the military camp in the "Ser ner Fort," lifted.

The tribunal rejected Makati's petition to have the Pasig City Regional Trial Court's decision overturned.

"Therefore, premises considered, the petition (of Makati) is hereby dismissed," said the decision penned by Associate Justice Edgardo Sundiam.

The appellate court said it junked Makati's petition since the city failed to question before the Supreme Court the order of Pasig Judge Godardo Jacinto on Sept. 11, 1996 which reinstated the preliminary injunction. That order became final and executory on July 2, 1998.

No more reviews

"Therefore, the Jacinto resolution, which has long become final and executory, is now the law of the case on the issue of the propriety of the issuance of a writ of preliminary injunction over the 'fenum fort' and can no longer be modified or reviewed," it said.

Makati had asked the appellate court to lift the injunction since it had submitted before the trial court that it was actually exercising jurisdiction over two barangays—Northside and Southside—inside the operating military camp. Makati earlier told the court that it has never attempted to exercise jurisdiction over the disputed camp.

However, the appellate court said that "the Pasig City Regional Trial Court correctly denied the preliminary injunction on July 31, 1998, based on the testimony of "two credible witnesses and the numerous documentary evidence" which established that Fort Bonifacio is in entirety is within the territorial jurisdiction of respondent Pasig."

"The limited claim of jurisdiction by petitioner would not affect the validity and scope of the subject injunction which covers the entire 'fenum fort,'" it said.

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Let's have a break

ATHLETES, like every mortal on earth, need a break. The cluster of break is, of course, according to one's own liking.

Me?

I usually hunt for music places. Thus, I'm all set for the Golden Legends show, starring newcomers, Feb. 12; The Golden Legends are Chris Montez, John Ford Coley and Gordon Waller. They will perform at Aliw Theater 9:00, 12 and at Hard Rock Café Makati Feb. 13 and Feb. 14.

What, others are all gone?

"No problem, partners," said Quintin Mercado. "You and your loved ones are assured of seats. Our friend Steve (O'Neal) will meet heaven and earth just to have you with us, especially on Valentine's Day."

Steve O'Neal happens to be the radio name of Ramon Sancoyo, a noted record collector and the country's foremost assembler of the biggest stars of the forties. Recently, O'Neal has brought in the likes of The Searchers, Friends of Distinction, Pat Upton of Spiral Staircase and Chad and Jeremy last year.

For Monday's 'adventure town (Feb. 14), O'Neal will present Montez and Gordon Waller, the main voice behind the famous Peter and Gordon sound. Before that, Gordon will team up with Coley and Hunter at Aliw Theater tomorrow, Feb. 12.

"It's the best of three worlds," said O'Neal. "Gordon is British. John is American and Chris is Hispanic. Their music is distinct. We all found it back then and we still have it now."

Coley came into the picture when Dennis 'Fist of Classics IV' Lane withdrew for personal reasons. Coley was a hit here last year when he performed at the sing-night-only sellout show at the Big Dome. Sky dear Apolinario Coley deadly.

Montez's top sellers include "Call Me," "The More I See You" and "Time After Time." His hit, "There Will Never Be Another You," was recorded locally with Tagalog lyrics by The Mina and Dida del Rosario of yesterday.

Coley's hits include "I'd Really Love To See You Tonight," "Where Do I Go From Here" and "Love Is The Answer."

Of the three, I distinctly recall Gordon, whose 'alkisarote name is Gordon Waterman-Kinney-Waller.

Gordon's partnership with Peter in the Sixties forms part of my growing up years.

Peter's sister, Jane Asher, was Sir Paul McCartney's girlfriend. That's why Mc-Cartney wrote several songs for Peter and Gordon, notably "World Without Love," "Nobody I Know," and "Woman."

Peter could not come for the show as he is busy with his job as a record producer and VP of Sony Music. He has managed several artists, including James Taylor, Linda Ronstadt and Randy Newman. The last time Peter and Gordon sang together was an impromptu duet at Gordon's wedding reception in 1990.

Peter Mcasher, writing in the book "Backbeat," said Peter and Gordon were the best-known male twosome in the mid-1960s, including Simon and Bobby.

In 1966, Peter and Gordon performed at the Big Beatle and Gordon met a girl named Lisa. Gordon said he wanted to meet her again. So, whenever you are Ars, please show up! You can call 5276507 or e-mail sporting@philstar.net.ph or sinophiles@yahoo.com.ph to O'Neal can arrange from seats near the ground zero family.

"I personally had a great time in Manila," said Gordon in his e-mail to Quintin. "I remember one particular girl called Ars who was very young and very beautiful. She's probably got 500 kids now."

Since O'Neal could not afford my fee, Gordon will instead pair with John Lennon, accompanied by the popular four-man group Arno One led by John Lennon himself.

Nope, no hard feelings at all, John. Who knows, I'll team up with Brent Barrett when the time comes?

Don't miss the show, folks. Try calling 851-3999 or 893-4001. Baka sikwatan nga (dikelyan.

"This is a must-see show," said O'Neal. "This might never happen again."

I second the motion.

***

BASEBREAK: Doing a fantastic job managing the Crispa's chairmanship at Bristol in the ongoing Kenna Manila National Open was Marilyn Abone, a trusted lieutenant of Lt. Jim top honcho Bert Bunoz like Lee Mirasol, Lee, so always, is Robert Bert's sweet weapon in the Pete/Ars urbane Commodore Benny Pineda's ire! I, the organizing committee chair, hardly calls the shots "from dummyville." The Pro/Am has also been its "high spirits" since Day One as chief brownnoser Joel Lorenzo keeps the Pro-Pesbo/brew flowing. Cheers!

Wizards weave magic vs Spurs; Heat prevail

KNICKS guard Stevon Arriaz (21) darts into Miami's Dwyane Wade as he attempts a potential game-winning layup as the end of regulation. The Heat won in overtime, 116-110. AP/FILE

TORONTO—Antawn Jamison and Gilbert Arenas confirmed their All-Star credentials by powering the host Washington Wizards to a 97-89 win over the NBA-leading San Antonio Spurs Wednesday.

Named a day earlier for their first All-Star Game, Jamison grabbed a season-high 35 points and added 11 rebounds while Arenas had 29 points as the Wizards smashed their unbeaten run to three games.

The Spurs were without Tim Duncan for the second successive game, the double NBA MVP remaining home to nurse a sprained ankle.

San Antonio's Tony Parker picked up 22 points, nine assists and eight rebounds as his team slumped to its first loss in six outings.

The Spurs remain top of the overall standings but now share first place with the Phoenix Suns, the two having identical 39-11 records.

In East Rutherford, Lamar Odom had 16 points, including four in overtime, and equaled a career-high 19 rebounds to spark the Los Angeles Lakers to a 104-102 victory over the New Jersey Nets which snapped a three-game losing skid.

Jermaine Jones contributed 20 points for the Lakers, who were again without Kobe Bryant due to a badly sprained right ankle.

New Jersey's Jason Kidd notched a triple-double for the second consecutive night with 20 points, 12 assists and 12 boards.

In New York, Dwyane Wade collected 38 points, Damon Jones had a season-high 24 and Shaquille O'Neal chipped in with 16 points and 13 rebounds to carry the Miami Heat to a 116-110 overtime win over the Knicks.

Stephon Marbury had a game-high 36 points for the Knicks, who have lost 13 of their last 15 encounters.

In Philadelphia, Chauncey Billups netted a career-high 23 points as the streaking Memphis Grizzlies squeezed past the 76ers 98-95 to post their fifth victory in six games.

Allen Iverson, the NBA leading scorer, had 38 points and 13 assists for the 76ers.

In Boston, Jiad Pierre recorded 25 points, 18 rebounds and nine assists as the Celtics rallied in the fourth quarter to edge the Los Angeles Clippers, 94-93.

Elton Brand had a game-high 30 points and 14 rebounds for the Clippers, who have lost Chris Mihm to the mumps.

In Houston, Tracy McGrady registered 33 points and Yao Ming contributed 21 points and 14 rebounds as the Rockets beat the Chicago Bulls, 105-92, to post a season-high fifth win in a row.

COMPLETE RESULTS: Boston 94, LA Clippers 93; Indiana 94, Charlotte 87; Memphis 98, Philadelphia 95; Washington 97, San Antonio 89; Milwaukee 104, Toronto 103; LA Lakers 104, New Jersey 102; Jazz (Miami) 116, Philadelphia 110; Houston 98, Denver 92; Houston 105, Chicago 92; (San Antonio 83, Portland 82.

Vijay stakes Pebble title against Phil

TORONTO—Shield member star Vijay Singh will have to contend with an in-form Phil Mickelson when he defends his title at this week's Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.

Mickelson, the US Masters champion, arrives as the percentage Monterey Peninsula venue in California finds from a five-stroke victory at last month's Phoenix Open that included a brilliant 11-under-par 60 in the second round.

"I can't wait to get back on the golf course," said left-hander Mickelson after finishing his 2005 campaign by winning last month's Sony Open in Hawaii, although his form has dipped slightly in his last two events.

At last month's Buick Invitational, he stayed in contention until a three-over 75 in the final round left him 13 strokes adrift of winner Woods.

At Phoenix, as were he had even more, Singh did not break par until tallying with a third-round 68 and a closing 68 left him in a share of 11th place.

Singh is also a former Pebble champion, having won the event in 1998 and 2000, but Mickelson has taken the measure of the opposition and make it supporters to the wishes of its loyal supporters and the basketball public. The changes include hiring new players, finding the old ones and beefing up the finished individual skills by acquiring National Athletes, an American physical conditioner with multi-purposed credentials. Tony Dolan will be retained at head coach although there will be revamp in the coaching staff.

"Despite of what you in the 2004-2005 season, we are still happy over Red Bull's achievements since joining the Philippine Basketball Association in 2000," narrated the ball-spoiler Chua. "So far, so good."

In 4-0-12 years or 12 conferences, Red Bull won two Commissioner's Cup championships, one reunion cup trophy, one third place medal and two fourth place finishes.

Competing with a cosmo-looks team, Red Bull scores its best year in title in 9th conference in 2001 to become the fastest expansion team in the history of the PBA. In the last three Conference, Red Bull placed second to Barangay Ginebra in the title series despite a depleted lineup.

"Coach Yeng and the boys gave their best and made it to the finals even though the team was devastated by import and health problems," said Soldier in first of five last six years at Pebble Beach.

His three-shot victory last year, scoring after he battled the fine three holes in the final round, set up one of the greatest years in the history of the game.

The seventh-swinging Fijian ended the season with nine PGA Tour titles, more than $10 million in prize money and at the game's leading player, Sunday ended Tiger Woods' five-year reign at the top last September.

Singh then made a fast start to the 2005 campaign by winning last month's Sony Open in Hawaii, although his form has dipped slightly in his last two events.

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The 36-year-old Kiwi-born, who traditionally makes a blistering start to each season, needed two tournaments to find top gear but is now in prime form.

The victory in Phoenix, his first since last year's US Masters, was achieved with the biggest winning margin of his career despite an opening two-over 73.

The world number four will be looking to improve on last year's effort at Pebble Beach where he finished third, four shots behind Singh after vying with the Fijian over the previous month.

The revised $5.3 million event is played over three fairways rating layouts—Pebble Beach, Spyglass Hill and Poppy Hills—and will make a deep overture to last week's event in Phoenix, which is one of the weakest locations on the tour.

Playing conditions will also be very different with the golfers leaving the dry Arizona desert for the generally soggy coastline/ resulting along the Monterey Peninsula. AFP

Red Bull sets revamp

THE ILL-STARRED Red Bull team will be going through changes in this year's PBA first-listed Conference which flees off next month.

"But it will be a change for the better," said team owner George Chua in an interview, adding that management has taken steps to strengthen the organization and make it responsive to the wishes of its loyal supporters and the basketball public. The changes include hiring new players, finding the old ones and beefing up the finished individual skills by acquiring National Athletes, an American physical conditioner with multi-purposed credentials. Tony Dolan will be retained at head coach although there will be revamp in the coaching staff.

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CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

the sportsminded Chua. "Our team played well but our rivals were simply hungrier."

Compared with seven other teams that made it to the PBA finals since 2000, the Red Bull owner said his team scored the best winning percentage of 67, an unwillingness in three attempts, and tied with Alaska and Coca-Cola with the second most number of titles with two, save to San Miguel Beer, which has three.

Sports team in George Chua's blood

As a student, he played college football as a one-College together with Red Bull team manager Jose Chua, who recently assumed the vice presidency of the Philippine Football Federation. As an employee, he was thrown the reins to become a top executive at Pharmaton Marketing Corp., a business firm known for its corporate commitment not only to basketball but also to various sports like boxing, golf, bowling and billiards. However, it is his participation in the PBA which would go down as one of his crowning achievements.

"Words are not enough to describe my happiness and gratitude for being given the chance to join the country's leading professional sports organization," he said after Red Bull became a regular member of the PBA in 2000. In only in second year in 2001, Red Bull won the first of two back-to-back PBA Commissioner's Cup title, beating San Miguel Beer, 4-2, in a well-attended best-of-seven series.

"The victory was fulfilling," said a teary-eyed coach Yeng Guiao during the all-night celebration at Cafe Breakwall. "This is something which I have never been seen in my long year as a coach in both the amateur and professional ranks." A former president of the Basketball Coaches Association of the Philippines, Guiao also mentored the 1983 Mighty Meralco to two PBA championships in 1,000 and 1993.

***

JUST ASKING: How efficient is the Philippine Olympic Committee in dealing with the public? Very few, I believe. I base my opinion on the letters I wrote about it. POC president Jose Cojuangco Jr. has not bothered to answer my queries. What's Cojuangco's solution to Chito's text woes? His failure to respond to an important query is a real reflection of the efficiency of the POC (and that of his people, including Jerry Buencamino?)... How true it is the report that Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) Chairman Ingrid Isturis and Mitzi Quintos (except results) in the dark about his recent trip to China with Fire Gentleman Mike Arroyo? The trip was part of the SEA Games preparations project aimed at boosting the Philippine bid to win the overall championships in this year's Southeast Asian Games.

Beverly Place sports haven in full swing

THE CENTERPIECE of Beverly Place takes shape.

THE GRAND community clubhouse, a sports and recreation haven, is fast rising inside the sprawling Beverly Place residential and business township property that Ilas Lucio Tan's family and Development Inc. (DMCI) of Jorge Araneta Gotianun.

The clubhouse, located in the heart of the 350-hectare project in San Fernando City, would soon offer residents an alternative venue for exercise and leisure.

"This is our commitment—to give our residents and their guests a place to do sports activities as well as to relax and socialize within the community," said Ilas Lucio president Tey Robles. "We're making their investment and their lives richer this way."

Upon completion, the clubhouse will feature first-class facilities such as covered courts for tennis, badminton and basketball, a sports bar, and a billiard hall.

There would also be a two-based camp complete with infield and adult swimming pools, lazy river, giant slides, and numerous fountains.

"Very soon, we will also start the construction of an 18-hole championship golf course which is now in the final stages of planning and negotiations with a golf course designer," said Robles.

Beverly Place is accessible via the South Luzon Expressway. It is adjacent to Montinlupa Panganga, right across Robinsons Homes. It consists every from Sucat to Alabang and 30 minutes away from Clark International.

Ilas Lucio has tapped Filipino Group of Marketing Companies as exclusive marketing network of Beverly Place. For information, log on to www.mlucio.com.

GTK to open Filway chess

NATIONAL Chess Federation of the Philippines president Go Teng Kok and Mandaluyong City Administrator Ernesto Ventura, representative of Mayor Benhil "Benny" Gonzalez, will grace the opening of Filway Time Life Open chess tournament this weekend in the second floor of Starmall Shopping Complex in Mandaluyong City.

Go Teng Kok and Ventura will make the ceremonial moves with Filway Marketing Inc. CEO/president Hector Tapiztay, Mandaluyong City Chess Association chair Epifanio De Guzman and co-organizer Wilson Morales. Marlon Bernardino, contributor

BUSINESS

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'04 exports post 9.3% growth to $40B

By Christine A. Gapuz

EXPORTS rose last year over 9.3 percent to $39.6 billion from $36.23 billion in 2003, the National Statistics Office yesterday said.

This, however, fell short of the government's growth target of 10 percent for the year, as the country's export performance in December left much to be desired.

Export receipts in the last month of 2004 grew by only 0.9 percent to $3.27 billion from year-ago level, the lowest growth posted since December 2000 and a sharp drop from November's 16.5 percent growth, the agency said.

Electronics exports, which accounted for 60.3 percent of the total export revenues in December, rose 0.3 percent to $2.20 billion from levels year ago level. For the whole year, electronics exports rose 10.2 percent to $24.44 billion.

Articles of apparel and clothing accessories remained the country's second top dollar earner with a combined share of 4.9 percent of total exports in December, with receipts of $158.4 million.

Japan remained the Philippines' top export destination, accounting for 19.5 percent of total export revenues in December.

Shipments to the US accounted for 15.6 percent of total exports, while those to the Netherlands and Hong Kong stood at 10.8 percent each, the statistics office said.

Newly appointed Trade and Industry Secretary Juan B. Santos said the country's exports had no chance of improving this year with non-traditional export products posting wider market acceptance and Philippine products started reaching new destinations.

Product and market diversification should be pursued aggressively and become a sustainable discipline with the business community itself, Santos said last Wednesday.

Earnings from all agro-based products in December amounted to $162.01 million, down 16.7 percent from $194.46 million in 2003.

Income from mineral products rose by 16.3 percent to $71.44 million from $61.21 million, while revenues from special transactions declined by 10.7 percent to $57.90 million from $64.83 million.

Petroleum products registered earnings of $49.21 million, while forest products contributed $5 million.

Bangko Sentral keeps policy rates steady

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE MONETARY Board yesterday decided to keep the central bank's key policy rates steady for the 19th month in a row, following the strengthening of the peso against the dollar and in view of expectations that inflation will be kept at manageable levels.

The policy rates were kept at 6.75 percent for overnight borrowing and 9 percent for overnight lending, according to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

Buenaventura said the peso had been gaining largely because of the weakening of the dollar against all major currencies.

The peso yesterday closed at 54.79 to the dollar at the Philippine Dealing System, slightly up from Wednesday's 54.85.

"The only difference this time is that we went along with the (low) stable last year before the presidential campaign along the regional trend because of election jitters and concerns over possible credit rating downgrades," the BSP chief said.

The BSP said the outlook on inflation reflected the assessment that the upturn in consumer prices was largely monetary as opposed exclusively to supply-side factors such as food and energy supply-side shocks.

"Owing to some of the prevailing macroeconomic and financial conditions, the BSP noted that the outlook for inflation over the policy horizon remains materially unchanged. While the current inflation is high, future inflation is expected to decline," Buenaventura said.

CURRENCIES

STOCK MARKET

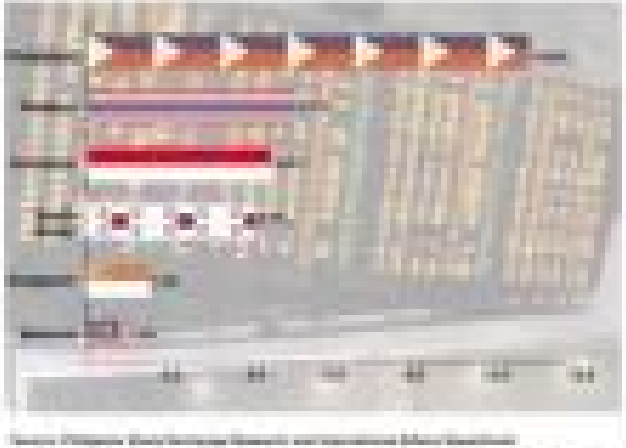
Shares end at 5-year high

(See stock market report on Page B2)

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our world in the

Stock exchange performance
(end-Dec 2004 & end-Jan 2005, in percent)



DA to impose strict product standards for virgin coco oil

By Christine A. Saylican

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture is set to impose minimum quality standards for the production of virgin coconut oil to increase the product's chances of "being accepted" in the global export market.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said quality standards were needed if the Philippines was to take advantage of the growing global demand for virgin coconut oil.

The Philippine Coconut Authority was tasked to draft the interim minimum quality standards, with help from the Department of Science and Technology, University of the Philippines Los Baños Biotech, UP Diliman and the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards (BAFPS), and members of the Virgin Coconut Oil Producers and Traders Association of the Philippines Foundation.

Yap said the implementation of a minimum Philippine National Standard (PNS) for virgin coconut oil would send positive signals to the market that the industry was serious about meeting international standards of quality and safety.

"Standardization of procedures is an important step that will assure customers that the Philippines' virgin coconut oil is safe," added Paulo Hemmingsen, president of the VCOPPA.

Demand for virgin coconut oil is growing as more countries turn to virgin coconut oil as an alternative food and health supplement.

"Based on our estimates, from 100,000 liters exported in 2003, shipments rose 100 percent to 200,000 liters in 2004. This will be sustained this year," said Hemmingsen.

There are about 20 virgin coconut oil manufacturers in the country, each one following its own product quality standards.

"If we are to really grow as an industry and aim for the export market, there should be harmonized standards that our buyers could expect. We cannot afford to have individual standards because just one bad shipment could ruin all our efforts," said Mahinguyan.

PCA deputy administrator for research, development and extension Carlos Carpio agreed that setting quality standards was needed if the fledgling industry was to reach its full potential.

"It is a very promising export industry and realizing the need to come up with quality standards should prevent other manufacturers from taking short cuts in their processes, or even adulterating the product to cut costs," said Carpio.

BAFPS director Gilberto Layese added that the standards should conform with international food quality standards.

P45,000 PER FILIPINO

RP debt hit ₱3.8T in Nov. '04

By Michelle V. Remo

AMATONG

RELENTLESS borrowing to cover the country's budget deficit increased national government debt to ₱3.8 trillion as of November last year.

This means that each of the roughly 84 million Filipinos owes ₱45,000 in local and foreign creditors.

Data from the Department of Finance showed that ₱1.56 trillion of the total debt came from domestic sources, and the remaining ₱1.82 trillion from abroad.

The government usually borrows locally through the regular auction of Treasury bills and bonds.

Foreign debt, on the other hand, are incurred through the issuance of sovereign bonds in the international credit market, and forging of official-to-official assistance deals with multilateral and bilateral lending agencies.

The November debt level was slightly higher by 1.2 percent, or ₱46.64 billion, than the ₱3.75 trillion recorded in October.

The increase was due to some ₱11.56 billion in fresh domestic borrowings and another ₱9.06 billion from abroad.

Foreign debt was computed using the ₱56.1-to-a-dollar exchange rate during the period.

The DOF said that only 15.8 percent of the latest debt figure was in the form of short-term liabilities, and 27.6 percent was medium-term. More than half of the debt figure, or 57.1 percent, fall mature over the long-term.

Outgoing Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong earlier said the profile of the country's debt, most of which have long-term maturities, puts the government far from the much-feared fiscal crisis.

She explained that the possibility of defaulting on its loans is remote as only a small percentage will mature in the next few years.

This puts the Philippines in a different situation from Argentina, which suffered a fiscal crisis in the '90s, when it defaulted on its mostly short-term loans.

The DOF said it has adopted the policy of "opportunistic" borrowing, which means taking advantage of long-term debt facilities.

This also means borrowing more from domestic sources to avoid foreign exchange risk.

The government has no choice but to keep on borrowing as its expenses continue to outpace revenues.

The DOF said that in case of borrowing from foreign sources, it prefers ODAs over commercial loans, since these carry lower interest rates.

The government has been in a deficit since the late '70s.

The government, however, has proposed several measures, such as the increase in the value-added tax rate, to increase revenues and narrow the budget gap.

The Arroyo administration plans to close the budget gap on or before 2010, the end of President Macapagal-Arroyo's term.

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Honda says bike market promising

By Abigail L. Ho

THE NEW P1.3-billion production plant of motorcycle manufacturer Honda Philippines Inc. (HPI) will have the capacity to produce 300,000 units a year, with room to expand to up to 1 million units.

Construction of the plant in Sto. Tomas, Batangas, will start in March, and will be in operation by January next year.

HPI president Yoichiro Oyama said in a speech yesterday that the new plant will not only improve the company's edge over the competition, but will also open opportunities for the country.

"When fully operational, the new assembly plant will generate an influx of new business possibilities across the nation. These will be in the form of new jobs and increased consumer demand," he said.

HPI currently has a production facility in Pandacan City, which produces up to 150,000 units of motorcycles.

With the establishment of the new plant, all its production processes in Pandacan will be transferred to Batangas.

Over the past four years, Oyama said HPI became the leader in the growing motorcycle market, cornering a 52-percent share of the pie.

The company last year sold a record 206,000 units, he said, 16 percent higher than in 2003.

In terms of production, HPI reached a cumulative milestone of 1 million units earlier this month. The company started producing motorcycles in 1985.

Oyama said the local motorcycle market should grow to at least 1 million units in the coming years, making production capacity expansion a necessity.

"It is for this reason that Honda is enhancing its production capacity by establishing the new plant to swiftly respond to the increasing demand," he said.

The local motorcycle market grew 31 percent in 2004, hitting sales of 470,000 units. The market is expected to expand further to 600,000 units this year.

Apart from answering local demand, Oyama said HPI is also looking at exporting some of the motorcycles that would be produced in its new plant.

Ayala, racing club to develop Manila property

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PROPERTY giant Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) will team up with Manila Jockey Club, Inc. to develop a 8.3-hectare Manila property into a residential project.

Industry sources said Community Innovations Inc. (CII) and Laguna Properties Holdings Inc. (LPHI), both wholly-owned units of ALI, submitted a proposal to the board of Manila Jockey for the joint development of Manila Jockey's 6.67-hectare property in Sta. Cruz, Manila.

Manila Jockey will contribute the land, while CII and LPHI will provide the funds and the technical resources required to develop the project.

The project will be the first venture of CII and LPHI in Manila.

ALI sources could not immediately reveal the project cost and details of the proposal, but Manila Jockey confirmed that it approved the joint venture.

Japanese firm puts up LCD module plant

By Abigail L. Ho

DAISHO Epson Imaging Devices (Philippines) Inc. will invest P600 million in a liquid crystal display (LCD) module production plant in Laguna.

The DEPH plant, to be put up under a Japanese agreement with semiconductor manufacturers Integrated Microelectronics Inc. and Sanyo Epson, is slated at IMI's property in the Special Export Processing Zone in Laguna. It will start operations in April this year.

It will have an initial annual capacity of 17 million pieces of LCD modules, representing about 10 percent of the annual global production of Seiko Epson Corp. and Sanyo Electric Co. Ltd. DEPH's parent firm, said DEPH director Takashi Shoda in a briefing yesterday.

Other LCD production plants are located in Japan and China.

The Philippine subsidiary was formed following the merger of the LCD production businesses of Seiko Epson Corp. and Sanyo Electric Co. Ltd. in October 2004.

Epson holds a 55-percent stake in the joint venture, while Sanyo holds the remaining 45 percent.

Nine said DEPH will have 50 supervisors and executives to oversee operations and around 1,000 employees to do the actual production.

Most workers will be hired as volume increases, he said.

DEPH estimates that the company will produce around 22 million pieces of LCD modules by 2007, which should still represent 10 percent of the company's projected global annual production of 230 million pieces of LCD modules.

DEPH president Mineo Shimizu said the Philippines was chosen as one of the locations for Sanyo Epson's LCD manufacturing plants because of the high level of education and skill of its workforce, the strategic location of the country in the world market and the strong government support for investors.

Data said the establishment of Sanyo Epson's Philippine arm will boost the company's chances of becoming the fourth biggest producer of LCDs.

Before the merger, Seiko Epson occupied the No. 4 spot, while Sanyo claimed the No. 10 position in the world ranking of small medium-sized LCD manufacturers.

Today falls under a new Standard

THE MERGER of two profit-strained dailies, Standard and Today originally set for Feb. 1, may have to wait until the week after next, at the earliest.

According to the grapevine, the management of the new English language broadsheet are still grappling with the details of the marriage, including the make-up of the merged paper and, the more nitpicky aspect, on who gets to head which section of the combined dailies.

The merger is actually a takeover, with Standard, backed by the Ang family-led ICTSI's Enrique Razon Jr., as the surviving broadsheet. But who was confirmed by Standard columnists Basil Jumalo whose vat bumped into new weekly spot.

Today has been looking for a stronger financier after telecom heir Antonio Cojuangco Jr., overwhelmed by the capital-intensive Chronicle's venture, backtracked from pumping in more cash into the financially challenged daily.

Until yesterday, the staffs of both Standard and Today had yet to be officially told of the pending merger, although Today, as a prelude to the takeover, started being printed in the Standard presses since mid-month last month.

According to the grapevine, Standard editor in chief Julie Yap Daza's wish to be relieved of day-to-day responsibilities may soon be realized with the entry of Today's Lourdes Molino-Fernandez as executive editor.

And Shoda's boss, Today founder Mabel Rip. Teodoro Locsin Jr., is seen as becoming the new financial publisher as well as occasional columnist.

Money-go-round

- TRADE Undersecretary Adrian Cristobal Jr. will move over to head the strategic Intellectual Property Office, with the exit of the new trade secretary, Juan Santos.
- PSTOCK market wizard Wilson Ilo and Manila Mining chair Felipe Yap have a new talking subject this time over the alleged rising of Nanda Mining's stake.
- After nine and a half years of waiting, the Delgados of Iskwen have finally received approval from Japan's Communications Telecommunication Commission to operate the island's telephone company, Verizon, which the 68-person acquired for $60 million.

Business class for less

NORTHWEST Airlines has resumed its popular curb-and-sellers promo, in time for the off-peak season travel dash.

From now until March 11, one can fly business class to the West Coast out of Manila for as little as $777 and 40,000 frequent flier miles. For East Coast cities, the same passage would cost $999 and 45,000 miles.

Those who have fewer miles can opt to make up with higher cash components.

Iskwen and Nagaya-bound passengers need only $199 and 20,000 miles for the same business class passage.

The return leg must be taken within 90 days after departure.

Heard through the grapevine

BARONG Tagalognon changes, Deputy Governor Armando Tolentino Jr. appears set to be appointed by President Macapagal-Arroyo as the next Bangko Sentral governor, when the term of Rafael Buenaventura expires next year.

Tolentino refused to be baited and declined to answer reporters' questions next, while Buenaventura, whose first choice is none other but Tolentino himself, called the report "speculation until the President picks the person and announces it."

Email: cocktales_pdi@philstar.net or andmail.com, pdi@yahoo.com

JG considering bond float to settle $187M in debts

By Clarissa S. Batino

JG SUMMIT Holdings Inc. of the Gokongwei family is considering the sale of fresh bonds this year to refinance a $187-million maturing debt in 2006, its top official said.

Lance Gokongwei, president of JG Summit, said the company might take advantage of the dollar and interest rate environment to raise money for debts falling due next year.

"If the interest rate environment will remain as it is now, we may go back to the market this year to issue some bonds," said Gokongwei. The company, he said, was looking at a bond float worth less than the $200 million sold in 2000.

JG Summit will have to evaluate whether it would be better to borrow more than just wait until the debts fall due.

"The last time we sold bonds was in 2000 and that was $200 million. We were sold that big an amount this time," the JG Summit official added.

JG Summit's food unit, Universal Robina Corp., is also scheduled to settle some $55 million in debts next year.

JG Summit is a holding unit holding firm with interests in airline, banking, food manufacturing, hotels, petrochemicals, power generation, publishing, real estate and property development, telecommunications and textiles.

"The proceeds of the bond issue will be used to settle JG's debt of about $187 million more likely by the middle of next year," added Gokongwei.

JG Summit is focusing on three big cyber projects this year. These are the $200-million expansion of Sun Cellular's network, the $900-million refloating of Cebu Air Pacific, and a $400-million cash-for-trucker plant in Batangas.

Metrobank, Landbank post double-digit profit growth

METROPOLITAN Bank and Trust Co. and Land Bank of the Philippines posted double-digit growths in net profits last year on higher interest earnings and tighter cost controls.

Metrobank, the country's biggest bank in terms of resources, yesterday reported that its consolidated net income last year rose by 20.2 percent to P16.6 billion from P1 billion in 2003.

Land Bank, in a separate report, said it registered P2.25 billion in net earnings in 2004, 12 percent higher than the previous year's P2 billion, ending a new profitability record.

"The improvement in net income was largely due to the strengthening of the bank's core business," said Metrobank president Antonio Abacan Jr.

Gaston and Metrobank had increased its focus on managing the cost of funds as interest expenses grew by only 2.6 percent while net interest income increased by 30.4 percent to P33.9 billion from only P9.1 billion last year.

In the same report, Metrobank said its total resources stood at P960.8 billion, maintaining its leadership in the industry while its capital remained solid at P53.6 billion.

Landbank president and CEO Gary Teves attributed the increase in Landbank's 2004 net income to a 33-percent growth in gross revenues, from P36.5 billion in 2003 to P21.4 billion last year, coupled with prudent management of expenses and implementation of austerity measures.

"We've set another record for the bank by exceeding our net income targets the first time in a row," Teves said.

"We posted a net income of P1.5 billion in 2004, which increased to P1.85 billion in 2003, after which we achieved a historic high of P2 billion in 2003," he said.

Doris C. Dumlao

8-hour water interruption in Makati due to upgrade of facility

Manila Water

This replacement of a 300 horsepower pump at the Makati Pumping Station will cause a temporary water service interruption in some portions of Makati from 10:00 p.m. Friday, February 11, 2005, up to 6:00 a.m. Saturday, February 12. Affected areas are the following: Central Business District, San Lorenzo Village, Urdaneta Village, Bel-Air Village 1-4, Salcedo Village, Legaspi Village, San Miguel Village, Barangay Poblacion, Guadalupe Nuevo, Pitogo, South Cembo, Pinagkaisahan and Cembo.

We regret any inconvenience the interruption will bring to our customers. The replacement of the pump is necessary to ensure the upgrade of major facilities and continuous distribution of water.

Residents are advised to store enough water prior to the schedule of the water interruptions.

For the latest update, please call our Customer Call Center Hotline at 1627.

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Jaguar MAKATI: [illegible]
Jaguar ORTIGAS: [illegible]
SERVICE CENTER: [illegible]

JAGUAR
Born to perform

Firm capital market key to RP's fiscal woes, says finance chief

By Michelle V. Ramos

DEC 08 2005 Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima is backing efforts to develop the domestic capital market, believing that the government can improve its fiscal position if more of its borrowing requirements will be sourced locally.

During a roundtable discussion with business business reporters and editors Wednesday night, Purisima noted that about 80 percent of the national government's domestic debts had been sourced locally, giving officials less flexibility in planning their finances.

He said that with an institutionalized capital market, the government's long-term debt purposes would have a better chance of getting more voluntary participation by a longer period that average maturity of its debts.

The local banking industry and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas are working on developing the country's bond market by establishing the so-called Bond Income Exchange (BIE). The BIE, which will operate much like the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), will be an open market for corporate private and government debt instruments.

The BSP said that the Philippines is lagging behind its neighbors in the area of capital market development because it still has no formal means for the trading of debt instruments.

Capital market is composed of the equities market (like PSE), the financial market (covering banks and non-bank financial intermediaries), and the bond market, which have yet to be developed with the establishment of the PSE.

The BSP said setting up a market for local debt instruments, which will complement the financial markets, was vital for economic growth because it will encourage investments. The central bank also said an PSE would be a viable investment alternative for investors, who were only almost limited to financial and equities instruments.

Purisima said that currently 80 percent of the financing requirements of companies from the private sector is sourced from banks, and only 2 percent is sourced from the capital market. This compares poorly with neighboring countries like Malaysia, where 30 percent of the financing requirements of private companies are sourced from their domestic capital market.

He said that with the BIE, the national government will have a means to issue peso-denominated bonds for its borrowing requirements, reducing its dependence on foreign borrowings which can be more costly due to foreign exchange risks.

ECO MUSEUM
HSBC CEO Warren Manning (right) and ABS-CBN Foundation managing director Gina Lopez discuss plans to put up a multimedia conservation showcase and environment learning center in Quezon City. HSBC has linked up with the ABS-CBN Foundation's Bantay Kalikasan to build the La Mesa Eco Learning Center and Museum in the La Mesa Eco Park in Quezon City. The facility, which will cater to school children and families, is expected to be completed within the year.

Sun's 24/7 is here to stay, execs claim

SUN CELLULAR will continue offering its unlimited 24/7 service indefinitely, the telco said in a statement.

"24/7 is here to stay," said Wilhelm Pandi-ani, senior vice president of Digitel, Sun Cellular's mother company. "It is a product, a subscription plan, and not a mere promotion which has a limited offering period."

Text messages saying that Sun would soon drop its 24/7 service began circulating days after Sun opposed the petition of Globe and Smart which sought to stop the popular service.

The two giant telcos claim that Sun is "dumping" its predatory pricing by offering rates that are too low.

Yesterday, Filipino Telephone Corp., a unit of Smart Communications Inc., claimed that its subscriber take-up rate was affected by Sun's 24/7 plan.

"Sun Cellular's pricing scheme has not really affected our subscriber take-up," said Rogelio Quevedo, Pilcorp's legal head. "There has been no slowdown."

The 24/7 plan of the Government-owned Sun Cellular had increased its wireless subscribers to 1.5 million from only 700,000 since the product was launched in October 2004.

According to Quevedo, Pilcorp and Smart will request telco subscriber base when the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. gives its summary in 2004 results on March 1.

He said a financial news blackout imposed on listed companies was preventing him from releasing Pilcorp and Smart's subscriber base, although PLDT's results had released that mobile customers likely surpassed the 20-million mark last year.

But Quevedo said that Pilcorp's strong recovery is being underscored by the National Telecommunications Commission's last endorsement of service quality and standards.

Quevedo said that the NTC had not been applying to Sun Cellular the same rigid standards it had implemented to leading operators. He added that Pilcorp and Smart had invested heavily into their network to give their subscribers seamless service.

Joyce Fernandez, NTC deputy commissioner, said the commission would look into Pilcorp's claims.

"The NTC wants clarity to rules first," said Quevedo. "If the NTC would change its performance standards, then we would probably compete in the same level."

Quevedo said that for Sun Cellular to deliver quality service to its customers, it must expand its network to 10 times. Sun Cellular said it would spend $200 million this year to increase its cellsite sites to 2,000 from about 1,500.

Digitel's current wireless network could accommodate 2 million subscribers and the expansion would bring up the capacity to about 5 million.

Pilcorp and Smart, according to Quevedo, could accommodate 20 million subscribers at roaming regular calling patterns.

"This is not a plan of Pilcorp. Sun Cellular from getting into the market," Quevedo said. "We can issue the NTC to follow the rules. The it about a level playing field ... the NTC cannot set different standards for another a different set of rules."

Digitel's Pantaleon had accused Smart and Globe of using their smaller scale to prevent Sun Cellular from competing.

"If they claim that our service is poor, then they should be happy," said Pantaleon. "They should be so sure of that to fix them. If they are really confident of their network and that ours is not it, go with them then they should be happy."

Doreen Y. Bulilan

Creating a strong agricultural voice

By Ernesto M. Ordonez

WE ARE in the age of globalization, and it can either be promising or perilous.

The promise is that we can now export goods to countries that have honored their tariff barriers. This means more jobs and less poverty. The peril is that, with our lowered tariffs, we may have to import goods that will replace our local production. The income being lost and lives ravenous our economy.

For Philippine agriculture, globalization has come to be more perilous than promising. In 1992-1993, for every $64 we imported, we exported $100. During the crisis years, however, the latest statistics show that for every $4.00 that we export, we import $1.47.

A 3-pronged approach

The most fast up to globalization, the most have yet to progress.

The first step is to promote technology. With antiquated systems, we cannot export our products to other countries. This is because we still suffer from the twin deficiencies of lower quality and higher costs, compared to our competitor neighbors.

Worse, we owe consumers will stop buying our products and substitute them with higher quality, small home yard imports. More jobs will be lost and our poverty will worsen.

Unfortunately, our agricultural technology has not been adequately supported. One indicator is that, for the last seven years, Congress has been subscribing to the Department of Agriculture less than half of the annual P12.5 billion as mandated by the Agricultural and Fishery Modernization Act.

Technology adoption does not happen overnight. Like other successful countries, which often suddenly subsidize their goods, we must give ourselves time to succeed. Our agriculture before we subject it to global competition.

Third, we need to have a predictably decreasing tariff schedule instead of sudden trade liberalization. We have been doing this. Several of our previously protected vegetables got a 7-percent tariff cut, well below the World Trade Organization's 40-percent bound rate.

But even with the twin moves of adopting the appropriate technologies and a predictably decreasing agricultural tariff schedule, rampant smuggling will render these useless. There was a time when 40 out of 100 imported agricultural containers arriving in Metro Manila were smuggled.

To execute this three-pronged approach of technology adoption, gradual liberalization, and anti-smuggling measures, a strong agricultural voice is needed. This is what agriculturists needed to have in mind when the Agricultural Tariffication Act was passed in 1994. Unfortunately, what happened was the opposite.

COMMENTARY

The agriculturists were fragmented into many groups, each with its own agenda. Instead of a strong voice, we had a cacophony of voices.

The biggest farmers' federation, existing today composed of 29 national and local federations and organizations.

There is now a Rice Farmers Council of the Philippines (RICP), which united all rice farmers. They succeeded in changing the previous government's position of lifting quantitative restrictions on rice in 2003. Their efforts benefited more than 3 million rice farmers' households.

The RICP also successfully promoted countervails a rice technology called the System of Rice Intensification, which improves soil fertility, produced truly and increases yields.

Another is the National Federation of Hog Farmers in the Philippines. Although it has 11 associations throughout the country, the hog farmers' federation is composed of only one of Alyansa's 39 associations.

The federation also succeeded in convincing the government plan to temporarily decrease hog tariffs at a time when there was a market glut and low prices. With out this effort, the 300,000 hog farmers would have suffered.

Aside from these two commendable agrarian examples, the Alyansa succeeded in changing government policies that raised some only affected several commodities, in particular the Minimum Access Volume (MAV) policy allowing the importation and marketing of smuggled agricultural goods, which would allow wind up in the hands of the smugglers themselves.

Instead, the government adopted the Alyansa proposal of giving these smuggled goods to the poor or destroying them. This, together with the country's entire involvement in the importation and importation of smuggled products, has led to the decrease in the smuggling rate from 40 percent to less than one percent.

On a more systemic basis, the Alyansa has also convinced the government to adopt a more pragmatic agricultural tariff reduction scheme.

Support

Agritech recognizes the creation of a strong united agricultural front, represented by the Alyansa Agrikultura, as a known collective in Philippine agricultural development. It therefore fully supports the strengthening of the Alyansa's organizational and action programs, especially in the technology and business areas.

As Agritech Valentine's Day Ticket Concert with two-time Grammy awardee Dulcinea Merto. The dancing Center on Bicutan Boulevard, starting at 8 p.m. For information, or if you care to make reservation and accommodation coordinator, please call 832-2111. It is open even on weekends.

(The author is the chair of Agrisentil, a private sector collective former Cabinet secretary for Investment Philippine Programs and Projects, and former undersecretary for agriculture and trade and industry. Comments may be sent to [illegible])

Currencies

Country	Unit	Cash Equivalent	Trading Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
Japan	Yen	0.38931	1.40000	0.1750
Europe	Euro	1.31000	1.32000	0.1750
United Kingdom	Pound	1.81470	1.83000	0.1750
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.12900	0.13000	0.1750
Australia	Dollar	0.76000	0.77000	0.1750
Canada	Dollar	0.80000	0.81000	0.1750
Singapore	Dollar	0.61000	0.62000	0.1750
Switzerland	Franc	1.21000	1.22000	0.1750
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.25000	0.26000	0.1750
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.26000	0.27000	0.1750
China	Yuan	0.12000	0.12500	0.1750
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.00010	0.00011	0.1750
Thailand	Baht	0.02400	0.02500	0.1750
Brunei	Dollar	0.61000	0.62000	0.1750
Korea	Won	0.00090	0.00095	0.1750
Argentina	Peso	0.35000	0.36000	0.1750
Brazil	Real	0.45000	0.46000	0.1750
Mexico	Peso	0.09000	0.09500	0.1750
India	Rupee	0.02300	0.02400	0.1750
Taiwan	Dollar	0.03000	0.03100	0.1750
Vietnam	Dong	0.00008	0.00009	0.1750
Kuwait	Dinar	3.40000	3.45000	0.1750
Bahrain	Dinar	2.65000	2.70000	0.1750
Qatar	Riyal	0.27000	0.28000	0.1750
United Arab Emirates	Dirham	0.27000	0.28000	0.1750
Oman	Rial	2.60000	2.65000	0.1750
Jordan	Dinar	1.85000	1.88000	0.1750
Kenya	Shilling	0.01300	0.01400	0.1750
Egypt	Pound	0.23000	0.24000	0.1750
Greece	Drachma	0.00384	0.00390	0.1750
Sweden	Krona	0.14000	0.14500	0.1750

LIFESTYLE

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

Text us your feedback: inquirer lifestyle <message> to 2327 (Globe or Smart)

ARMANI Mania Pour Femme

CLINIQUE Happy to Be

Shopping list for hearts

MAKEOVER 911

Kirsty Sudan

IMAGINE I am walking with you when you shop for a gift for your significant other. Flowers for women, of course, are traditional, and their classic partner is chocolate. But with nearly everyone on diet-conscious, she may not appreciate the pair unless she's a chocoholic. So you may pair flowers with: a) fragrances, b) bath products, c) jewelry (sweet!), etc. Don't worry guys, I won't mention any jewelry suggestions.

Not that he deserves a gift, but my favorite man's fragrance must-have last but not a long one. They're perfect for our weather and no Filipino male who has received them has ever complained. My choices: Calvin Klein Crave, Allyson Ashley Blank for men, Issey Miyake Blue Rose Homme, Jean Paul Gaultier Le Male, Bulgari Omnia and Elle Swiss.

Trainers: These were really created for men but the women just couldn't fall in love with them. Top choices: Thierry Mugler's Mugler Cologne, Issey Sumi's Eaudelle and Hair Elixir, Clarins Green Tea, Bvlgari Au The Blanc Ombre rose and my personal concoction of The Body Shop's Olive Oil shower gel and oil spray topped with

CONTINUED ON C2

THE BODY Shop Olive and Lemon Tea

JOHNSON'S Baby Softwash

HEALTH Express Power V

Shopping list for hearts

From page C1

their lemon tea fragrance smells fresh and sexy for both.

Women: There are so many new ones, but I still recommend my classic favorites as well. Shiseido's Energizing, Octalyne's Happy Ocean (a citrusy) and newest addition Sappy (a bit sweet with cocoa butter), Armani Jour Ouvrilla, white flowers, amber, musk) and Armani/Mania, from Today (citrus floral), Crabtree and Evelyn's Bassanino (my preference) or Evelyn Rose collection, (according to Mystic Jo-Magic, which I prefer more than the classic as it is a lighter floral musk version of Mitsouko.

Bath products

There is no bigger turn on to one's sense of touch than soft smooth skin all over and you would be glad to know my recommendations are very affordable. The Body Shop's Ylang Ylang body collection is labeled "sensual" because it has been proven that ylang ylang is a **potent aphrodisiac for women. Texture in the** mix is patchouli, a potent aphrodisiac for men. It has a bath mixture, body cream and bath oil. For those who need to relax after a stressful week...Ha! has a line called Softwash and Soft Lotion, calming with my favorite lavender and chamomile scent incorporated. If I were you I would run to the calming products as well. For those who prefer a milky scent go for the plain Softwash and Soft Lotion with 24-hour moisture.

For men: Crabtree & Evelyn's Gentian Wash shower gel and toning spray will make **him feel fresh, clean and alive. The scent is** something I would describe as aquatic.

For yourself: Ultimate aphrodisiac

Remember that Valentine's will fall on a Monday this year during which you will go through harrowing traffic and a hectic workday. If that doesn't dampen your mood and drain all stamina you must be Superman or Wonder Woman.

Health Express has just the thing to perfect your evening ... Power V (Vitality Tablet) is an herbal concoction created to stimulate both men and women. It increases libido, stamina and energy. The dosage is two tablets 90 minutes to two hours before your romantic interlude. The active ingredients are Yohimbe, Ginseng and Niacin. Please read the back of the label thoroughly or consult your doctor to ask if certain ingredients are dangerous for you. So far there have been no complaints among my friends who have tried them, but a few say they get sticker very excited. Instead of palpitations.

Check out their website at www.healthexpress.ph.com to find out more as it is their focus of the month. Click on "contact us" if you want to know the branch nearest you and the telephone number.

CRABTREE & Evelyn Rosewater

CHAVE by Carine Klein

LIFESTYLE

grahamkandiah.com
Create an island-girl vibe with over 30 sarong selections made of printed and hand-embroidered fabric from India. Check out other items such as kurtas, caftans, belts, totes, cover-ups, summery Hawaiian style men's shirts, plus a lot more.

caftaracapri.com
Head toward the Riviera and check out this renowned Capri boutique that offers hand-made jeweled sandals. The boutique is quite an institution and has been favored by the jet set and royalty for more than 50 years now.

Online shopping, anyone?

jadetworocco.com
Do you dream of scouring Marrakech bazaars for unusual and exotic finds? No need to fly to Morocco. Visit this site and discover treasures galore like henna lamps, mosaic tables, lamps and rugs. Fashionistas will also enjoy browsing through an exotic selection of clothing, slippers and jewelry.

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberin-Escalante

Most women, and surprising-ly even men, consider shopping (be it window or internet) as a favorite activity. Not only is it fun and relaxing, it is even therapeutic and days I say an alternative form of cardiovascular activity.

And although Manila is now quite a Mecca for shopaholics and fashion-istas, there's a totally different kind of thrill you feel from shopping in cyberspace around the globe. Unfortunately, we can't just hop on a

PHILSTAR C4

accessoriesny.com
A cyber flea market that sells an eclectic selection of bags, belts, scarves...etc. from specialty artisans. Watch out for up-n-coming designers like Tom Tao le Monde, Carlos Falchi and many others. The site is categorized according to designer or category, so you should have an easy time finding your way around.

stylebirdy.com

There's nothing more luxurious than a tailored shirt, and the English have been known to excel in this field. Now you can order your own fitted "Paris" shirt from British tailor Charles Tyrwhitt. Or check out other staples such as the "Classic" or "City" shirts.

espadrillesetc.com

Get set for summer and score up on colorful, fun espadrilles from Spain. There are numerous styles and designs from brands like Castaner, Jacksonville and Rio. Go for the trendy wedge-heeled variety to update your wardrobe, or stick with classic flats for comfort.

omotesando.com

No need to get lost in translation while shopping for funky finds from Tokyo. This site offers Japanese street fashion for the young and young-at-heart.

Online shopping, anyone?

From page C2

pit and runs to New York. Make or some exotic locale for a quick shopping jaunt.

So, what's the next best thing? Shopping online, of course! You don't need a passport or a visa, and you won't suffer from jet lag. What's more, you can visit as many places as you want in a with a simple click of the mouse. But just a caveat, make sure you review all shipping costs and return policies before hitting buy. Also, check out ec.com for currency conversions and orbitz.com for sizing charts.

Bear in mind that some sites may not allow payments to be made through locally issued credit cards and may not even have the Philippines in their list of countries. I experienced that on eBay as I had to ask a friend in the US to complete the transaction. I even went so far as writing a letter asking why we were not included in eBay's list of accredited countries but sadly, I only received an automated reply.

In any case, don't let that stop you. It certainly didn't discourage me from doing more fun shopping.

There are some interesting sites from around the world that you might want to visit. Happy shopping!

E-mail the author at ajsalcedo@hotmail.com.

LOVIN' THOSE LIPS

E-Rand Elements presents Trulips, a unique line of lip colors that bring both beauty and nourishment to lips in sensuous shades that glide on smoothly for long-lasting, polished color. Call 911 9607.

PRODUCT has undertones to expose skin

SELLING BUTTON-BEARING dancers

FIT for summer

Say goodbye to your stretch marks

MAKEOVER launch features models in cropped undies.

A new Vaseline product takes care of women's most pesky concern

THE VASELINE promises can be yours in eight weeks.

Text by Miss Y. Vergara
Photos by Joseph Agustin

MODELS and discoed found their hammies in a recent fashion show dressed by Junior apprentices at the Power Plant Mall, as fans like Inbox formally launched the Black Masterpiece.

The newest variant in Vaseline's Skin Solutions line promises to minimize and reduce the appearance of unsightly stretch marks through its formulations that combines triple lipids, alpha lipids and lactic acid.

Vaseline has yet to launch the homegrown product outside the Philippines. The Black Masterpiece came about during the latter part of 2000 after Unilever did in-research among young women, especially mothers, and found out that stretch marks are one of their chief concerns. It came in the heels of White and Glow Vaseline's answer to Filipino women's obsessed with fairer skin.

The multinational's research and development team lost no time working on a "solution," which resulted in an affordable product for the mass market. Part of the research includes having women test the products' three

PERFECT for body PHOOEY!

solutions formula to the force reportedly boost satisfaction.

"But a few women were concerned about their stretch marks," says Jenny Juhasz, one of Unilever's brand managers. "Stretch marks to-linkered them from wearing certain clothes and affecting certain activities they used to enjoy more."

This concern, adds Juhasz, is far from imaginary. While stretch marks are usually associated with pregnancy, studies show that they manifest themselves on the skin several time a person dramatically gains and loses weight. Certain factors can make you more susceptible to stretch marks such as heredity and known collagen levels.

So how does the product work? Stretch marks initially look like pinkish, reddish or brownish lines. Gradually, these lines will flatten and fade with time. Black Masterpiece is said to help the natural process by providing skin with nutrients that become cell growth.

Lactic acid is said to exfoliate old skin, while lipids help create new, healthy and radiant skin. It will take at least eight weeks of twice daily use for the product to make its mark. The product is not bleach, says Juhasz, but it has the same fortifying properties found in ordinary lotions.

"Some women experienced visible improvement in their skin in less than eight weeks," says Juhasz. "We had the product tested by dermatologists. There may be some who may need more to it, but overall it has no known side effects."

The Black Masterpiece has been out in the market since late last year and has been enjoying brisk sales, thanks in part to its print and TV commercials featuring model Rosie Rosario. "But models with not-so-flawless skin" by the product's officers before she did the catwalk with fellow mannequins dressed mostly in cropped and tight-fitting outfits by Pamela Lorenzana and stars. Modern and belly dancers provided additional entertainment.

Despite such a limited breakthrough, people behind the Black Masterpiece admit that it can only go so far in reducing the appearance of these dreaded stretch marks. You'd have to undergo some form of skin surgery to totally eliminate them.

E-mail the author at ververgara@inquirer.com.ph

BOTTLED breakthrough is an miracle drug.

HAIR Minimizer inspires model and models some Rosie Rosario

Romantic but cutting-edge

From page A1

G FOR GLOW: Glowing G with Red Head Girl Toys

quick styling. Eric suggests waxbased styling aids like Red Head Rubber Rugs.

Tierney agrees. "My favorite product is the Red Head Stick. My hair can be stubborn so I need products with good control. This works great for me as I usually have my hair styled a little funky."

Selected lines is located

on C. Palanca Avenue in Legaspi Village, Makati.

Tigi Red Head is available at Salon de Ens and other leading salons.

HARD TO GET and charming boy next door Brad Tierney wears a smile and a spiky 'do with the help of Red Head Hard To Get.

G-LICIOUS: Tousled hair with Red Head Creative Genius

IN CONTROL: Hair reconstructed by Red Head Rubber Rugs

FIESTA popular couple hostess with the mostest Consul to Guatemala Malito and husband, business magnate Louie Mitiaza

PAST presidents Toni Castro with escort John Seidl

FORMER Sen. Nikki Coseteng and joint Laya ready for the rigodon de honor

WHEN presidents dance: Popular past presidents Benna Lorenzana and escort, another past president, Sonny Sanchanco

Swell nights with Bulakeños and the consular corps

AMBASSADOR Bienvenido A. Tantoco Sr., Ama ng Bulacan honoree, with Club Bulakeño founder Gloria Reyes and co-founder Lydia Reyes

ELEGANT Kathy Malixeno Zita, Kashmir gentleman Jun Lopez, Monalisa Tantoco Lopez, Erika Shangri-La's Toni Zita, Marilou Tantoco Pineda and Eddie Pineda

PATRICK jacket-with Nicky Tantoco, her father Ambassador Bienvenido A. Tantoco Sr., his granddaughter Catherine Tantoco Huang, DJ Lopez, and Aimee Tantoco Huang, head of Bistro Synsations, Inc.

INCOMING vicon Jovina Joy Tantoco is crowned by Sen. Manuel Villar and models Marian, while escort Edmund Lipana looks on.

WINE, STACEY and Cosmopolitan Beauty of the Be With campaign, with Consul Marian Tuya of Ireland

JOHANNA Montero and husband, Chilean Ambassador Jorge Montero, with Costa Rica Consul general Fausto Freyster Jr.

CONSUL of Monaco Fortuna Alona Lobrantin recognized "for making the 29th Consular Ball the most outstanding, enjoyable and financially viable undertaking of the Corps (on record)," given by Consul Vince Carlos of Ivory Coast, the dean of the Consular Corps of the Philippines

DEAN Vince Carlos (right) receives a leadership award for outstanding year of service from immediate past dean Oscar de Nonclo.

METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani and Marikina City Mayor Marides Fernando, among the 350 guests of Club Bulakeño

SOUTHERN lady Nena Vargas and husband, host to the divine Rico Tantoco

PAGASA's fine couple, radiantly eye-catching Dr. Elenita B. with husband, dynamic Mayor Jejomar Binay

US CONSUL General David and Sheila Donahue

TENG and Annie Aytian with Bosnia Consul General Dr. Juan M. Pena behind

US Deputy Chief of Mission Joseph A. Mussomeli and wife Sharon

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arnaiz

Photos by Alex Yan Hagon using Kodak EasyShare

Y'EL palangga, it's been 16 years since the founding of Club Bulakeño by the well-respected civil engineer and musician, Gene Reyes, and his distinguished wife, Lydia.

The club has since become a non-pretentious socio-civic organization whose primary mission and tradition is to provide scholarship grants to indigent but deserving students of Bulacan; donate infant incubators to the Bulacan Provincial Hospital; and donate books to the Malolos Elementary School, plus other deserving organizations, palangga.

Club Bulakeño's officers, distinguished advisers have established their consistency in the camaraderie in the ballroom hours. Bulakan's grand ladies and magnificent gentlemen welcomed the 800 or so invitees with that typical friendly Bulacan smile.

Après dinner, the group's past president, Nena Carreon, did a superb invocation-lyrical Bulacan Tagalog, while Binggie Cobarrubias emceed the ceremony in excellent, flawless Filipino and called on classical diva, Nena Peace Jimilo Pedrosa-Jacoma, to lead the National Anthem. Then past president, popular civic-minded socialite Berna Lorenzana, with good looking John Caddel, in lieu of past president Senior Statesman, gave the welcome remarks, palangga.

This year, the unanimous choice for the prestigious "Ama ng Bulacan" was none other than Ambassador Bienvenido Tantoco Sr., who had concurrently served as Philippine envoy to the Holy See and to the Sovereign Military Order of Saint John in Rhodes, Malta, from 1985-1990. It was he who gave the Philippines prominence in world social business through his diplomatic skills, and definitely a champion of the poor."

The ceremonies commenced-proper with the entrance of reigning mun, eye-catching beauty Jonnas Joy Tantoshaun, the only daughter of Sonny T., in a Rajo Laurel gown.

The must-do rigodon de honor had the elegant Bulakeñan looking sosy in either red or maroon black terno, while the leather Bulakeñan sayo in either chic white or black dinner jackets, reminiscent of the Commonwealth era.

The finale was the elegant waltz danced to the music of Dahagang Pilipino, by the pillars of Club Bulakeño, Lydia and Arnold Reyes, Mayor Bam Carreting and Ofelia Trinidad, Tess Castro and John Caddel, Ogie Villareal and Gigi Trinidad, Jaime Laya and Mrs. Nikki Coseteng, Secretary Ober and Susan Papelbaum, Louie and Bella Mitiaza, and Sonny Sanchanco and Berna Lorenzana.

"I could have danced all night," as the song goes, and dahilan, believe me, they did to the soothing sounds of Ghosts Ensemble and her band.

It's crystal clear that a club like this and other high-profile clubs in the country have come a long way since the original club of clubs, the ultra-elegant Manila club, the Ballroom Club, had their grand balls, participated by the cream of the cream in the leagues of vague names and businesses and their heirs, palangga.

Consular Ball

It was the night everyone got all dolled up and excited in the international community. It was the Annual Consular Ball, which the Consular Corps of the Philippines was hosting for the 29th year. Rhymed a year in advance by the Iranian Consul, Toastmaster Fernando J. Cardoz, the dean of the consular corps, and a hyperactive emceeing sensation chaired by Monaco Consul Fortuna S. Ledesmas, the affair turned out to be a tremendous record-breaking success, darlings.

Attendance was the biggest ever, with more than 600 elite in sheer sweeping the grand Hotel Ballroom of the grandiose Makati Shangri-La, natch.

In his witty brief remarks, Dean Vicente Carlos announced, "that the Consular Corps of the Philippines would be donating a substantial amount of the modest surplus from the sale of Consular Ball tickets, to the calamity victims of the Asian tsunami disaster."

The witty emcee was, oh yes, none other than my palangga, Johnny Litton, a regular featurette of the ball for years.

Hot-hot named-reppables at the dinner Carlos's table were Sen. Ed Ermita S. Lim, brilliant Supreme Court Justice Artemio "Tex" S. Panganiban with his adorable wife Lirai, and Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo with his lovely wife Lovely and daughter Alana Romulo-Puyat.

The big-ticket winner of the glitzy affair was the tour of to-die-for prizes that were stuffed all, like, inthe crisp, week-long Mediterranean, Caribbean and Rome cruise, and free weekend packages at big Philippine resorts...plus loads of other wow prizes.

With Mabuti Hangri-Lei's gift of mega cheers, we got an exquisite six-course set menu, complemented by an overflow of scrumptious wines and liquor.

There to rock and roll with some of the hottest bands in the land. Pinky Marquez, Bimbo Custodio and the Cheke Latina Band dished out non-stop dance music that brought thousands of elite-persons shaking the dance floor very-very pare Cinderella's last time.

Hey, how! It is the Annual Consular Ball as we-everyone-la-really have a ball!